

FOUR ESSAYS,

AS IMPROVED AND ENLARGED

IN THE

SECOND EDITION

OF THE

RELIQUES OF ANCIENT
ENGLISH POETRY.

VIZ.

- I. On the ANCIENT ENGLISH MINSTRELS.
- II. On the ANCIENT METRICAL ROMANCES.
- III. On the ORIGIN of the ENGLISH STAGE.
- IV. On the Metre of PIERCE PLOWMAN's Visions.

MDCCCLXVII.

THE LARGER NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS belonging to the following **ESSAY**, not to incumber the pages, are thrown together to the end, and are referred to by the capital letters (A.) (B.) &c.



A N
E S S A Y
O N T H E
A N C I E N T E N G L I S H M I N S T R E L S .

I. **T**HE MINSTRELS (A) were an order of men in the middle ages, who united the arts of poetry and music, and sung verses to the harp of their own composing. They also appear to have accompanied their songs with mimicry and action; and to have practised such various means of diverting as were much admired in those rude times, and supplied the want of more refined entertainments (B). These arts rendered them extremely popular and acceptable in this and all the neighbouring countries; where no high scene of festivity was esteemed complete, that was not set off with the exercise of their talents; and where, so long as the spirit of chivalry subsisted, they were protected and caressed, because their songs tended to do honour to the ruling passion of the times, and to encourage and foment a martial spirit.

The MINSTRELS seem to have been the genuine successors of the ancient BARDS (C), who under different names were admired and revered, from the earliest ages, among the people of Gaul, Britain, Ireland and the North; and indeed by almost all the first inhabitants of Europe, whether of Celtic or Gothic race*; but by none more than by our own Teutonic

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ancestors,

* Vid. Pelloutier Hist. des Celtes. tom. 1. l. 2. c. 6. 10.

ancestors†, particularly by all the Danish tribes ||. By these they were distinguished by the name of SCALDS, a word which denotes " Smoothers and Polishers of language §". The origin of their art was attributed to ODIN or WODEN, the father of their Gods; and the professors of it were held in the highest estimation. Their skill was considered as something divine; their persons were deemed sacred; their attendance was solicited by kings; and they were every where loaded with honours and rewards. In short, poets and their art were held among them in that rude admiration, which is ever shown by an ignorant people to such as excel them in intellectual accomplishments (D).

As these honours were paid to Poetry and Song, from the earliest times, in those countries which our Anglo-Saxon ancestors inhabited before their removal into Britain, we may reasonably conclude, that they would not lay aside all their regard for men of this sort immediately on quitting their German forests. At least so long as they retained their ancient manners and opinions, they would still hold them in high estimation. But as the Saxons, soon after their establishment in this island, were converted to Christianity; in proportion as literature prevailed among them, this rude admiration would begin to abate; and Poetry would be no longer a peculiar profession. Thus the POET and the MINSTREL early with us became two persons (E). Poetry was cultivated by men of letters indiscriminately; and many of the most popular rhimes were composed amidst the leisure and retirement of monasteries.

† Tacit. de Mor. Germ. cap. 2.

|| Vid. Bartholin. de Causis contemptæ a Danis mortis. lib. 1. cap. 10.—Wormij Literatura Runic. ad finem.—See also "A Description of the Manners, Customs, &c. of the ancient Danes and other northern nations: from the French of M. Mallet." 2 vol. 8vo.

§ Torfæi Præfat. ad Orcad. Hist.—Pref. to "Five pieces of Runic Poetry." &c.

monasteries. But the Minstrels continued a distinct order of men for many ages after the Norman conquest; and got their livelihood by singing verses to the harp at the houses of the great. There they were still hospitably and respectfully received, and retained many of the honours shewn to their predecessors the BARDS and SCALDS (F). And tho', as their art declined, some of them only recited the compositions of others, many of them still composed songs themselves, and all of them could probably invent a few stanzas on occasion. I have no doubt but most of the old heroic Ballads in this collection were composed by this order of men. For altho' some of the larger metrical Romances might come from the pen of the monks or others, yet the smaller narratives were probably composed by the Minstrels, who sung them. From the amazing variations which occur in different copies of these old pieces, it is evident they made no scruple to alter each others productions; and the reciter added or omitted whole stanzas according to his own fancy or convenience.

In the early ages, as was hinted above, the profession of oral itinerant Poet was held in the utmost reverence among all the Danish tribes; and therefore we might have concluded, that it was not unknown or unrespected among their Saxon brethren in Britain, even if History had been altogether silent on this subject. The original country of our Anglo-Saxon Ancestors is well known to have lain chiefly in the Cimbric Chersonese, in the tracts of land since distinguished by the names of Jutland, Angelen, and Holstein*. The Jutes and Angles in particular, who composed two thirds of the conquerors of Britain, were a Danish
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people,

* Vid. Chronic. Saxon. a Gibson. p. 12, 13. 4to.—Bed. Hist. Eccles. à Smith. lib. 1. c. 15.—“*EALDSEXE [Regio antiq. Saxonum] in ceruice Cimbrica Chersonesi, Holsatiam proprie dictam, Dithmarsiam, Stormariam, et Wagriam complectens.* Annot. in Bed. a Smith. p. 52. Et vid. Camdeni Britan.

people, and their country at this day belongs to the crown of Denmark * ; so that when the Danes again infested England, three or four hundred years after, they made war on the descendents of their own ancestors †. From this near affinity we might expect to discover a strong resemblance between both nations in their customs, manners, and even language ; and in fact we find them to differ no more, than would naturally happen between a parent country and its own colonies, that had been severed in a rude uncivilised state, and had dropt all intercourse for three or four centuries. Especially if we reflect, that the colony here settled had adopted a new Religion, extremely opposite in all respects to the ancient Paganism of the mother-country ; and that even at first, along with the original Angli, had been incorporated a large mixture of Saxons from the neighbouring parts of Germany ; as afterwards, among the Danish invaders, had come vast multitudes of adventurers from the more northern parts of Scandinavia. But all these were only different tribes of the same common Teutonic Stock, and spoke only different dialects of the same Gothic Language.

From this sameness of original and similarity of manners, we might justly have wondered, if a character so dignified and distinguished among the ancient Danes, as the SCALD or BARD, had been totally unknown or unregarded in this sister nation. And indeed this argument is so strong, and, at the same time, the early annals of the Anglo-Saxons are so scanty and defective (G), that no objections from their silence could be sufficient to overthrow it. For if these popular bards were confessedly revered and admired,

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* *Anglia Vetus, hodie etiam Anglen, sita est inter Saxones et Gotos [Jutos] habens oppidum capitale. . . . Sleswick. Ethelwerd. lib. i.*

† See "Descript. of the Manners, &c. of the ancient Danes." Vol. I. pag. 7, 8. — 185. — 259, 260, 261.

in those very countries which the Anglo-Saxons inhabited before their removal in to Britain ; and if they were afterwards common and numerous among their own descendants here after the Norman Conquest, what could have become of them in the intermediate time ? Can we do otherwise than conclude, that this order of men still subsisted here, though perhaps with less splendour than in the North ; and that there never was wanting a succession of them to hand down the art, though some particular conjunctures may have rendered it more respectable at one time than another ? And this was really the case. For though much greater honours seem to have been heaped upon the northern SCALDS, in whom the characters of historian, genealogist, poet, and musician were all united, than appear to have been paid to the MINSTRELS and HARPERS (H) of the Anglo-Saxons, whose talents were chiefly calculated to entertain and divert ; while the Scalds professed to inform and instruct, and were at once the moralists and theologues of their Pagan countrymen : yet the Anglo-Saxon Minstrels continued to possess no small portion of public favour ; and the arts they professed were so extremely acceptable to our ancestors, that the word which peculiarly denoted their art, continues still in our language to be of all others the most expressive of that popular mirth and jollity, that strong sensation of delight, which is felt by unpolished and simple minds (I).

II. HAVING premised these general considerations, I shall now proceed to collect from history such particular incidents as occur on this subject ; and whether the facts themselves are true or not, they are related by authors who lived too near the Saxon times, and had before them too many recent monuments of the Anglo-Saxon nation, not to know what was conformable to the genius and manners of that people ; and therefore we may presume, that their relations prove

at least the existence of the customs and habits they attribute to our forefathers before the conquest, whatever becomes of the particular incidents and events themselves. If this be admitted, we shall not want sufficient proofs to shew, that Minstrelsy and Song were not extinct among the Anglo-Saxons; and that the professor of them here, if not quite so respectable a personage as the Danish Scald, was yet highly favoured and protected, and continued still to enjoy considerable privileges.

Even so early as the first invasion of Britain by the Saxons, an incident is recorded to have happened, which if true, shews that the Minstrel or Bard was not unknown among this people; and that their princes themselves could upon occasion assume that character. Colgrin, son of that Ella who was elected king or leader of the Saxons in the room of Hengist *, was shut up in York, and closely besieged by Arthur and his Britons. Baldulph, brother of Colgrin, wanted to gain access to him, and to apprize him of a reinforcement which was coming from Germany. He had no other way to accomplish his design, but to assume the character of a MINSTREL. He therefore shaved his head and beard, and dressing himself in the habit of that profession, took his harp in his hand. In this disguise, he walked up and down the trenches without suspicion, playing all the while upon his instrument, as an HARPER. By little and little he advanced near to the walls of the city, and making himself known to the centinels, was in the night drawn up by a rope.

Though the above fact comes only from the suspicious pen of Geoffry of Monmouth (K), the judicious reader will not too hastily reject it; because if such a fact really happened, it could only be known to us through the medium of the British writers: for the first Saxons, a martial but unlettered people, had no historians of their own; and Geoffry, with all his fables,

* See Rapin's Hist. (by Tindal, fol. 1732. Vol. I. p. 36.) who places the incident here related under the year 495.

bles, is allowed to have recorded many true events, that have escaped other annalists.

We do not however want instances of a less fabulous æra, and more indubitable authority : for later History affords us two remarkable facts (L), which I think clearly show, that the same arts of poetry and song, which were so much admired among the Danes, were by no means unknown or neglected in this sister nation ; and that the privileges and honours which were so lavishly bestowed upon the northern SCALDS, were not wholly withheld from the Anglo-Saxon MINSTRELS.

Our great King Alfred, who is expressly said to have excelled in music †, being desirous to learn the true situation of the Danish army, which had invaded his realm, assumed the dress and character of a MINSTREL (M) ; when, taking his harp, and one of the most trusty of his friends, disguised as a servant ‡ (for in the early times it was not unusual for a Minstrel to have a servant to carry his harp), he went with the utmost security into the Danish camp : and though he could not but be known to be a Saxon by his dialect, the character he had assumed procured him a hospitable reception. He was admitted to entertain the king at table, and staid among them long enough to contrive that assault, which afterwards destroyed them. This was in the year 878.

About sixty years after *, a Danish king made use of the same disguise to explore the camp of our king Athelstan. With his harp in his hand, and dressed like a MINSTREL (N), Anlaff king of the Danes went among the Saxon tents ; and taking his stand near the king's pavilion, began to play, and was immediately admitted. There he entertained Athelstan and his lords with his singing and his music, and was at length

† By BALE and SPELMAN. See Note (M), ‡ Vid. Note (M).

* Anno 938. Vid. Rapin, &c.

length dismissed with an honourable reward, though his songs must have discovered him to have been a Dane (O). Athelstan was saved from the consequences of this stratagem by a soldier, who had observed Anlaff bury the money which had been given him, either from some scruple of honour or motive of superstition. This occasioned a discovery.

Now, if the Saxons had not been accustomed to have MINSTRELS of their own, Alfred's assuming so new and unusual a character, would have excited suspicions among the Danes. On the other hand, if it had not been customary with the Saxons to shew favour and respect to the Danish SCALDS, Anlaff would not have ventured himself among them, especially on the eve of a battle (P). From the uniform procedure then of both these kings, we may fairly conclude, that the same mode of entertainment prevailed among both people, and that the MINSTREL was a privileged character with each.

But if these facts had never existed, it can be proved from undoubted records, that the Minstrel was a regular and stated officer in the court of our Anglo-Saxon kings: for in Doomesday book, *Joculator Regis*, the KING'S MINSTREL, is expressly mentioned in Gloucestershire; in which county it should seem that he had lands assigned him for his maintenance (Q).

III. We have now brought the inquiry down to the Norman conquest: and as the Normans had been a late colony from Norway and Denmark, where the SCALDS had arrived to the highest pitch of credit before Rollo's expedition into France, we cannot doubt but this adventurer, like the other northern princes, had many of these men in his train, who settled with him in his new duchy of Normandy, and left behind them successors in their art: So that, when his descendant, WILLIAM the BASTARD, invaded this kingdom in the following

century*, that mode of entertainment could not but be still familiar with the Normans. And that this is not mere conjecture, will appear from a remarkable fact, which shew that the arts of Poetry and Song were still as reputable among the Normans in France, as they had been among their ancestors in the north; and that the profession of MINSTREL, like that of SCALD, was still aspired to by the most gallant soldiers. In William's army was a valiant warrior, named TAILLEFER, who was distinguished no less for the minstrel-arts (R), than for his courage and intrepidity. This man asked leave of his commander to begin the onset, and obtained it. He accordingly advanced before the army, and with a loud voice animated his countrymen with songs in praise of Charlemagne and Roland, and other heroes of France; then rushing among the thickest of the English, and valiantly fighting, lost his life.

Indeed the Normans were so early distinguished for their minstrel talents, that an eminent French writer (S) makes no scruple to refer to them the origin of all MODERN POETRY, and shews, that they were celebrated for their Songs above a century before the TROUBADOURS of Provence, who are supposed to have led the way to the poets of Italy, France, and Spain.

We see then that the Norman conquest was rather likely to favour the establishment of the minstrel profession in this kingdom, than to suppress it: and we may even conclude, that, after that period, this order of men would grow into more favour and repute; and the profession itself acquire new privileges (T).

IV. After the Norman conquest I have not met with any very particular fact concerning the MINSTRELS, till we come down to the reign of Richard the first:

* Rollo was invested in his new duchy of Normandy, A. D. 912. William invaded England, A. D. 1066.

first : and under him their profession seems to have revived with additional splendor. Richard, who was the great restorer and hero of Chivalry, was also the distinguished patron of Poets and Minstrels : He was himself of their number, and some of his verses are still extant *. As the Provençal Bards were in his time in high request for the softness of their language, and the superior elegance of their compositions, Richard invited multitudes of them to his court, where he loaded them with honours and rewards : and they in return celebrated him as the most accomplished monarch in the world (U). The distinction and respect which Richard showed to men of this profession, although his favours were chiefly heaped upon foreigners, could not but recommend the profession itself among his own subjects : and therefore we may conclude, that English Minstrelsy would, in a peculiar manner, flourish in his time : and probably it is from this æra, that we are to date that remarkable intercommunity and exchange of each other's compositions, which we discover to have taken place at some early period between the French and English Minstrels : the same set of phrases, the same species of characters, incidents, and adventures, and often the same identical stories, being found in the old metrical Romances of both nations (V).

The distinguished service which Richard received from one of his Minstrels, in rescuing him from his cruel and tedious captivity, is a remarkable fact, which ought to be recorded for the honour of poets and their art. This fact has lately been rescued from oblivion, and given to the world in very elegant language

* See a curious Provençal Song of his in Mr. WALPOLE's Catalogue of Royal Authors, Vol. I. p. 5. This, so far as I can understand it, seems not to be destitute of pathetic and sentimental beauties.

guage by an ingenious lady *. I shall here produce a more antiquated relation of the same event, in the words of an old neglected compiler †.

“ The Englishmen were more than a whole yeare,
 “ without hearing any tydings of their king, or in
 “ what place he was kept prisoner. He had trained
 “ up in his court a RYMER or MINSTREL, called
 “ BLONDELL DE NESLE: who (saith the Manuscript
 “ of old Poesies ‡, and an auncient Manuscript French
 “ Chronicle) being so long without the sight of his
 “ lord, his life seemed wearisome to him, and he be-
 “ came confounded with melancholy. Knowne it
 “ was, that he came backe from the Holy Land: but
 “ none could tell in what countrey he arrived.
 “ Whereupon this Blondel, resolving to make search
 “ for him in many countreys, but he would hear
 “ some news of him; after expence of divers dayes in
 “ travaile, he came to a towne || by good hap, neere
 “ to the castell where his maister king Richard was
 “ kept. Of his host he demanded, to whom the ca-
 “ stell appertained, and the host told him, that it be-
 “ longed to the duke of Austria. Then he enquired
 “ whether there were any prisoners therein detained
 “ or

* (From the French of Presid. FAUCHET's *Recueil*, &c.) See
 “ Miscellanies in prose and verse: by ANNA WILLIAMS. Lond.
 1766.” 4to. p. 46.—It will excite the Reader's admiration to be
 informed, that most of the pieces of this Collection were composed
 under the disadvantage of a total deprivation of SIGHT.

† Mons. FAVINE's Theatre of Honour and Knighthood, trans-
 lated from the French. Lond. 1623. fol. Tom. II. p. 49.

‡ This the author calls in another place, “ An ancient MS. of
 “ old Poesies, written about those very times.”—From this MS.
 Favine gives a curious account of the taking of Richard by the duke
 of Austria, who sold him to the emperor. As for the MS. chro-
 nicle, it is evidently the same that supplied FAUCHET with this
 story. See his *Recueil de l'Origine de la Langue & Poesie Françoisse*,
Ryme, & Romans, &c. Par. 1581.

|| TRIBALES.—“ *Retrudi eum præcepit in Triballis: a quo car-
 cere nullus ante dies istos exiit.*” Lat. chron. of Otho of Austria:
 apud Favin.

“ or no: for alwayes he made such secret questionings
 “ wheresoever he came. And the host made answer,
 “ there was only one prisoner, but he knew not what
 “ he was, and yet he had bin detained there more
 “ than the space of one yeare. When Blondel heard
 “ this, he wrought such meanes, that he became ac-
 “ quainted with them of the castell, AS MINSTRELS
 “ DOE EASILY WIN ACQUAINTANCE ANY WHERE:
 “ but see the king he could not, neither understand
 “ that it was he. One day he sat directly before a
 “ window of the castell, where king Richard was kept
 “ prisoner, and began to sing a song in French, which
 “ king Richard and Blondel had some time composed
 “ together. When king Richard heard the song, he
 “ knew it was Blondel that sung it: and when Blondel
 “ paused at half of the song, the king ‘ BEGAN
 “ THE OTHER HALF AND COMPLETED IT *. Thus
 “ Blondel won knowledge of the king his maister, and
 “ returning home into England, made the barons of
 “ the countrie acquainted where the king was.” This
 happened about the year 1193.

The next memorable event, which I find in history
 concerning the Minstrels, is also much to their credit;
 and this was their rescuing one of the great Earls of
 Chester when besieged by the Welsh. This happened
 in the reign of K. John *; and is related as follows:

“ Hugh the first Earl of Chester, in his charter of
 foundation of St. Werburg’s abbey in that city, had
 granted such a privilege to those, who should come to
 Chester fair, that they should not be then apprehended
 for theft or any other misdemeanor, except the crime
 were

* I give this passage from M. FAUCHET; as the English translator
 of M. FAVINE’s book appeared here to have mistaken the original:
 which is, *Et quant Blondel ót disté la moitié de la Chanson, le Roy
 Ricbart je prist a dire l’autre moitié et l’acheva.* Fauch. Rec. p. 93.

* Vid. Dugdale (Baronage, vol. i. p. 42. 101.) who places it af-
 ter the 13th year of K. Joh. Anno Dom. 1212.—See also Camden’s
 Brit. Plot’s Staffordsh. &c.

were committed during the fair. This special protection caused multitudes of loose and disorderly people to resort to that fair; which afterwards proved of signal benefit to one of his successors. For Ranulph the last Earl of Chester, marching into Wales with a slender attendance, was constrained to retire to his castle of Rothelan or Rhuydland; in which he was straightly besieged by the Welsh. Finding himself hard pressed, he contrived to give notice of his danger to Lord Roger (or John) de Lacy, Constable of Chester, who making use of the MINSTRELS then assembled at Chester fair: These men, like so many Tyrtæus's, by their Music and their Songs so allured and inspirited the multitudes of loose and lawless persons then brought together, that they resolutely marched against the Welsh: Hugh de Dutton, a gallant youth, who was steward to Lacy, putting himself at their head. The Welsh alarmed at the approach of this rabble, supposing them to be a regular body of armed and disciplined veterans, instantly raised the siege and retired."

For this good service, Ranulph granted to the Lacies by charter a peculiar patronage over men of this sort: who devolved the same again upon Dutton and his heirs†. And the MINSTRELS his assistants, enjoyed for many ages peculiar honours and privileges under the descendants of that family. For even so late as the reign of Elizabeth, when this profession had fallen into such discredit, that it was considered in law as a nuisance, the Minstrels under the protection of the family of Dutton, are expressly excepted out of all acts of parliament made for their suppression; and have continued to be so excepted ever since (W).

The ceremonies attending the exercise of this jurisdiction, are thus described by Dugdale as handed down to his time, viz. "That at Midsummer fair, " all

† See a very curious ancient record, upon this subject, in Blount's Law Dictionary, 1717. fol. (article MINSTREL.)

“ all the minstrels of that country resorting to Chester,
 “ do attend the heir of Dutton, from his lodging to
 “ St. John’s church (he being then accompanied by
 “ many gentlemen of the country) one of ‘ the
 “ minstrels’ walking before him in a surcoat of his
 “ arms depicted on taffata; the rest of his fellows
 “ proceeding two and two, and playing on their several
 “ sorts of musical instruments. And after divine
 “ service ‘ is’ ended, ‘ they’ give the like attendance
 “ on him back to his lodging; where a court being
 “ kept by his [Mr. Dutton’s] Steward, and all the
 “ MINSTRELS formally called; certain orders and
 “ laws are usually made for the better government of
 “ that Society, with Penalties to those who shall
 “ transgress them.”

To resume the thread of this slight history, in the
 reign of Edward I. (severe as that monarch was in extirpating the Bards of Wales), a MULTITUDE OF MINSTRELS are expressly mentioned to have given their attendance in his court at the solemn act of knighting his son (X): and under the reign of his son, such extensive privileges were claimed by these men, and by dissolute persons assuming their character, that it became a matter of public grievance, and was obliged to be reformed by an express regulation in the year 1315 (Y). Notwithstanding which, an incident is recorded in the ensuing year, which shows that MINSTRELS still retained the liberty of entering at will into the royal presence, and had something peculiarly splendid in their dress. It is thus related by Stow (Z).

“ In the year 1316, Edward the second did solemnize his feast of Pentecost at Westminster, in the great
 “ hall: where sitting royally at the table with his
 “ peers about him, there entered a woman ADORNED
 “ LIKE A MINSTREL, sitting on a great horse trapped,
 “ AS MINSTRELS THEN USED, who rode round about
 “ the tables, shewing pastime: and at length came
 “ up to the king’s table, and laid before him a letter,
 “ ter,

"ter, and forthwith turning her horse saluted every
"one and departed." — The subject of this letter
was a remonstrance to the king on the favours heaped
by him on his minions, to the neglect of his knights
and faithful servants.

It was a Minstrel who was deputed to this office, as
one of that character was sure of gaining an easy admit-
tance: and a Female Minstrel was the rather chosen, I
suppose, as more likely to disarm the king's resentment:
for there should seem to have been women of this pro-
fession, as well as those of the other sex (Aa).

In the fourth year of Richard II. † John of Gaunt e-
rected at Tutbury in Staffordshire, a COURT OF MIN-
STRELS, with a full power to receive suit and service
from the men of this profession within five neighbour-
ing counties, to enact laws, and determine their contro-
versies; and to apprehend and arrest such of them, as
should refuse to appear at the said court, annually held
on the 16th of August. For this they had a charter by
which they were empowered to appoint a KING OF
THE MINSTRELS with four officers to preside over
them (Bb). These were every year elected with great
ceremony, the whole form of which is described by Dr.
Plott ‡; in whose time however they appear to have lost
their singing talents, and to have become mere musi-
cians.

Even so late as the reign of Henry VIII. a stated
number of Minstrels were retained in all great and no-
ble families, as appears from the Establishment of the
Household of the then EARL OF NORTHUMBER-
LAND (Cc): and we find, that it was at that time a
common entertainment to hear verses recited, or moral
speeches learned for that purpose, by a set of men who
got their livelihood by repeating them, and who intru-
ded without ceremony into all companies; not only in
b taverns,

† Anno Dom. 1381.

‡ Hist. of Staffordsh. ch. 10. § 69---76. p. 435, &c.

AN ESSAY ON THE

taverns, but in the houses of the nobility themselves. This we learn from Erasmus, whose argument led him only to describe a species of these men who DID NOT SING their compositions; but the others that DID, enjoyed without doubt the same privileges (Dd).

The Reader will find that the Minstrels continued down to the reign of Elizabeth; in whose time they had lost much of their dignity, and were sinking into contempt and neglect. Yet still they sustained a character far superior to any thing we can conceive at present of the singers of old ballads †.

When Queen Elizabeth was entertained at Killingworth Castle by the Earl of Leicester in 1575, among the many devices and pageants which were exhibited for her entertainment, one of the personages introduced was that of an ancient MINSTREL, whose appearance and dress are so minutely described by a writer there present (Ee), and give us so distinct an idea of the character, that I shall quote the passage at large.

“ A PERSON very meet seemed he for the purpose, of
 “ a xlv years old, apparelled partly as he would him-
 “ self. His cap off: his head seemly rounded Tonster-
 “ wise ‡: fair kembed, that with a sponge daintily
 “ dipt in a little capon's greace was finely smoothed,
 “ to make it shine like a mallard's wing. His beard
 “ smugly shaven: and yet his shirt after the new trink,
 “ with ruffs fair starched, sleeked and glistering like
 “ a pair of new shoes, marshalled in good order with
 “ a setting stick, and strut, 'that' every ruff stood up
 “ like a wafer. A side [i. e. long] gown of Kendale
 “ green, after the freshnes of the year now, gathered
 “ at the neck with a narrow gorget, fastened afore with
 “ a white clasp and a keeper close up to the chin; but
 “ easily, for heat, to undo when he list. Seemly be-
 “ girt in a red caddis girdle; from that a pair of cap-
 “ ped

† See vol. 2. of Ancient Songs, &c. p. 167, &c.

‡ “ Tonsure-wise,” after the manner of the Monks.

ped Sheffield knives hanging a' two sides. Out of
 " his bosom drawn forth a lappet of his napkin† edged
 " with a blue lace, and marked with a D for Da-
 " mian, for he was but a batchelor yet.
 " His gown had side [i. e. long] sleeves down to
 " mid-leg, slit from the shoulder to the hand, and lined
 " with white cotton. His doublet-sleeves of black
 " worsted, upon them a pair of points of tawny cham-
 " let laced along the wrist with blue threaden poinets†,
 " a wealt towards the hands of fustian-a-napes. A
 " pair of red neather stocks. A pair of pumps on his
 " feet, with a cross cut at his toes for corns: not new
 " indeed, yet cleanly blackt with soot, and shining as
 " a shoing horn.
 " About his neck a red ribband suitable to his
 " girdle. His HARP in good grace dependent before
 " him. His WREST* tyed to a green lace and hang-
 " ing by: Under the gorget of his gown a fair flag-
 " gon chain, (pewter || for) SILVER, as a SQUIRE
 " MINSTREL OF MIDDLESEX, that travelled the
 " country this summer season, unto fair and worship-
 " ful mens houses. From his chain hung a scutcheon,
 " with metal and colour, resplendant upon his breast,
 " of the ancient arms of Islington."

—This Minstrel is described as belonging to that
 village. I suppose such as were retained by noble fam-
 ilies, wore the arms of their patrons hanging down
 by a silver chain as a kind of badge †. From the ex-

b 2

pression

† i. e. handkerchief, or cravat.

† Perhaps, Points.

* The key, or screw, with which he tuned his harp.

|| The reader will remember that this was not a REAL MIN-
 STRFL, but only one personating that character: his ornaments
 therefore were only such as OUTWARDLY represented those of a real
 Minstrel.

† As the HOUSE of NORTHUMBERLAND had anciently THREE
 MINSTRÉLS attending on them in their castles in Yorkshire, so
 they still retain THREE in their service in Northumberland, who
 wear

profession of **SQUIRE MINSTREL** above, we may conclude there were other inferior orders, as **YEOMEN MINSTRELS**, or the like.

This Minstrel, the author tells us a little below, "after three lowly courtesies, cleared his voice with
"a hem, . . . and wiped his lips with the hollow of
"his hand for 'filing his napkin, tempered a string or
"two with his **WREST**, and after a little warbling on
"his **HARP** for a prelude, came forth with a solemn
"song, warranted for story out of King Arthur's acts,
"&c."—This song the reader will find printed in vol. 3. of *Ancient Songs*, &c. p. 25. and some farther account of the state of Minstrelsy and Ballad-singing in *Q. Elizabeth's* reign, vol. 2. of *Ancient Songs*, &c. p. 166, &c.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century this class of men had lost all credit, and were sunk so low in the public opinion, that in the 39th year of Elizabeth*, a statute was passed by which "Minstrels, wandering
"abroad," were included among "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars," and were adjudged to be punished as such. This act seems to have put an end to the profession, for after this time they are no longer mentioned.

V. I

wear the badge of the family, (a **SILVER CRESCENT** on the right arm) and are thus distributed; viz. One for the barony of Prudhoe, and Two for the barony of Rothbury. These attend the court leets and fairs held for the Lord, and pay their annual suit and service at Alnwick castle; their instrument being the ancient Northumberland bag-pipe (very different in form and execution from that of the Scots; being smaller; and blown, not with the breath, but with a small pair of bellows).

This, with many other venerable customs of the ancient **EARLS** of **NORTHUMBERLAND** has been revived by those, who, at present, with so much lustre and dignity, inherit the honours of that noble House; who, to all the great qualities of their predecessors, unite the utmost goodness and condescension; and with whom the slightest talents, and humblest efforts to please, are sure not to pass **UNREWARDED**.

* *Anno Dom.* 1597. *Vid. Pult. Stat.* p. 1110, 39° *Eliz.*

V. I CANNOT conclude this account of the ancient MINSTRELS, without remarking that they are most of them represented to have been of the North. There is hardly an ancient Ballad or Romance, wherein a Minstrel or Harper appears, but he is characterized by way of eminence to have been "OF THE NORTH COUNTRY†:" and indeed the prevalence of the Northern dialect in such kind of poems, shews that this representation is real. The reason of which seems to be this; the civilizing of nations has begun from the South: the North would therefore be the last civilized, and the old manners would longest subsist there. With the manners, the old poetry that painted these manners would remain likewise; and in proportion as their boundaries became more contracted, and their neighbours refined, the poetry of those rude men would be more distinctly peculiar, and that peculiarity more strikingly remarked.

The Reader will observe in the more ancient ballads of this collection, a cast of style and measure very different from that of contemporary poets of a higher class: many phrases and idioms, which the Minstrels seem to have appropriated to themselves, and a very remarkable licence of varying the accent of words at pleasure, in order to humour the flow of the verse, particularly in the rhimes; as

<i>Countrie</i>	<i>harper</i>	<i>battell</i>	<i>morning</i>
<i>Ladie</i>	<i>singer</i>	<i>damsel</i>	<i>loving,</i>

instead of *country, lady, harper, singer, &c.*—This liberty is but sparingly assumed by the classical poets of the same age; or even by the latter composers of Heroical Ballads: I mean by such as professedly wrote for the press. For it is to be observed, that so long as the Minstrels subsisted, they seem never to have designed their rhimes for literary publication, and probably never committed them to writing themselves: what copies are

b 3

preserved

† See vol. I. of Ancient Songs, &c. p. 68, 69, &c.

preserved of them were doubtless taken down from their mouths. But as the old Minstrels gradually wore out, a new race of Ballad-writers succeeded, an inferior sort of minor poets, who wrote narrative songs merely for the press. Instances of both may be found in the reign of Elizabeth. The two latest pieces in the genuine strain of the old Minstrelsy that I can discover, are No. III. and IV. of Book III. in this volume. Lower than these I cannot trace the old mode of writing.

The old Minstrel-ballads are in the northern dialect, abound with antique words and phrases, are extremely incorrect, and run into the utmost licence of metre; they have also a romantic wildness, and are in the true spirit of chivalry.—The other sort are written in exact measure, have a low or subordinate correctness, sometimes bordering on the insipid, yet often well adapted to the pathetic; these are generally in the southern dialect, exhibit a more modern phraseology, and are commonly descriptive of more modern manners.—To be sensible of the difference between them, let the Reader compare in this volume No. III. of Book III. with No. X. of Book II.

Towards the end of Queen Elizabeth's reign, (as is mentioned above), the genuine old Minstrelsy seems to have been extinct, and thenceforth the Ballads that were produced were wholly of the latter kind, and these came forth in such abundance, that in the reign of James I. they began to be collected into little miscellanies, under the name of GARLANDS, and at length to be written purposely for such collections (Ff).

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

REFERRED TO IN THE

FOREGOING ESSAY.

(A) The MINSTRELS, &c.] The word *Minstrel* does not appear to have been in use here before the Norman conquest; but at what particular period it was taken up I have not discovered, nor yet whether it was coined in England or France: though I am inclined to think the latter; where this character was called *Menestrel*, *Menestrier*, &c. which was latinized by the Monks, &c, *Ministellus*, *Ministrellus*, *Ministrallus*, *Menesterellus*, &c. [Vid. Gloss. Du Cange & Supplem.]

Menage derives the French words above mentioned from *Ministerialis* or *Ministeriarius*, barbarous Latin terms, used in the middle ages to express a Workman or Artificer (still called in Languedoc *Ministral*) as if these men were styled ARTIFICERS or PERFORMERS by way of excellence [Vid. Diction. Etym.] But the origin of the name is given perhaps more truly by Du Cange. "MINISTELLI . . . quos vulgo *Menestreux* vel "*Menestriers* appellamus, quod minoribus aulae *Ministris* "accenserentur." [Gloss. IV. p. 769.] Accordingly, he says, the word "*Minister*" is sometimes used "*pro Ministellus*," and produces an instance which I shall insert at large in the next paragraph.

Although one of these I take to be the true etymology, yet Junius's conjecture deserves mention, who supposes the word MINSTREL to be of English origin, and deduces it from our old English or Saxon name for a cathedral, MINSTER. "*Ut proprie Minstrels dicti fuerint qui in Cathedralibus Ecclesiis inserviebant choro Deum jugi cantu celebrantium. . . . Fortasse quoque Cambro-Britannis pari modo Cleri dicti sunt Musici: ex*

quo nempe Clerici canere cœperunt in Ecclesiis." [Etym. Ang.] That the Minstrels sometimes assisted at divine service, appears from the record of the 9th of Edw. IV. quoted by the ingenious Author of the Observations on the Ancient Statutes, &c. [4to. 2d edit. 1766. p. 273.] by which "Haliday, Cliffe, Marshall, and others are erected into a Gild or Fraternity; to which certain WOMEN are likewise associated. By part of this record it is recited to be their duty to sing in the king's chapel, and particularly for the departed souls of the king and queen when they shall dye, &c."—The same also appears from the passage in Du Cange, alluded to above. "MINISTER . . . pro *Ministellus* Jocularior."—*Vetus ceremoniale MS. B.M. deaurata* "Tolos. Item, etiam congreguabuntur Piscatores, qui debent interesse isto die in processione cum MINISTRIS seu Jocularioribus: quia ipsi Piscatores tenentur habere isto die Joculatores, seu Mimos ob HONOREM CRUCIS — et vadunt primi ante processionem cum Ministris seu Jocularioribus semper pulsantibus usque ad ecclesiam S. Stephani." [Gloss. 773.]—This will also account to us for the clerical appearance of the MINSTRELS, who from the middle ages downwards seem to have been distinguished by the TONSURE, which was one of the inferior marks of the clerical character. Thus Jeffery of Monmouth, speaking of one who acted the part of a Minstrel, says, *Rasit capillos suos & barbam*, (see Note K) in which, though he speaks of a very distant fact, yet he probably represents the appearance, as it was in his time. Again a writer, in the reign of Elizabeth, describing the habit of an ancient Minstrel, speaks of his head as "rounded Tonster-wise," (which I venture to read Tonsure-wise), "his beard smugly shaven." See above, p. 18.

It must however be observed, that, notwithstanding this clerical appearance of the Minstrels, and though they

* MINISTERS seems to be used for MINSTRELS in the Account of the Inthronization of Abp. Neville. (An. 6. Edw. IV.) "Then all the Chaplyns must say grace, and the MINISTERS do sing." Vid. Leland, Collectan. by Hearne. vol. 6. p. 13.

they might be sometimes countenanced by such of the clergy as were of more relaxed morals, their sportive talents rendered them generally obnoxious to the more rigid Ecclesiastics, and to such of the religious orders as were of more severe discipline; whose writings commonly abound with heavy complaints of the great encouragement shewn to these men by the princes and nobles, and who can seldom afford them a better name than that of *Scurræ, Temelici, Nebulones*, &c. of which innumerable instances may be seen in Du Cange. It was even an established order in some of the monasteries, that no Minstrel should ever be suffered to enter their gates.

(B) "The Minstrels used mimicry and action, and "other means of diverting, &c." It is observable, that our old monkish historians seldom use the words *Cantator, Citharædus, Musicus*, or the like, to express a MINSTREL in Latin, but either *Mimus, Histrion, Jocular*, or some other word that implies gesture. Hence it might be inferred, that the Minstrels set off their songs with all the arts of gesticulation, &c. or, according to the ingenious hypothesis of Dr. Brown, united the powers of melody, poem, and dance. [See his History of the Rise of Poetry, &c.]

But this is also proved by more positive evidence; for all the old writers describe them as exercising various arts of this kind. We have a remarkable instance of this in Joinville's life of S. Lewis*; which shews, that the MINSTRELS were sometimes very dextrous Tumblers and Posture-masters. "Avec le Prince vin-
"rent trois Menestriers de la Grande Hyermenie [Ar-
"menia) et avoient trois cors.—Quand ils en-
"commenceoient a corner, vous disiez que ce sont les
"voix

* The curious reader may see the extract at large, in the Observations on the Ancient Statutes, p. 273. Joinville however seems to speak of this as a rare instance.

“voix de cygnes, . . . et fesoient les plous douces
 “melodies. — Ils fesoient trois merueilleux saus, car
 “on leur metoit une touaille desous les piez, et tournoi-
 “ent tout debout. . . . Les deux tournoient les testes
 “arieres,” &c. &c.

This will account to us for that remarkable clause in the presis warrant of Henry VI. “*De Ministrallis propter solatium regis providendis*,” by which it is required, that the boys to be provided in *arte Ministrallatus instructos*, should also be *membris naturalibus elegantes*. See the warrant at large in Rymer, 34. Hen. VI. (Observ. on the Anc. Stat. p. 273.)

By MINSTREL was properly understood in English, One who sung to the harp, or some other instrument of music, verses composed by himself or others: Not but the term was sometimes applied by our old writers to such as professed either music or singing separately, and perhaps to such as practised any of the sportive arts connected with these*. Music however being the leading idea, was at length peculiarly called MINSTRELSY, and the name of MINSTREL at last confined to the Musician only.

In the French language all these Arts were included under the general name of *Menestrandie Menestrandise, Jonglerie*, &c. [Med. Lat. *Menestellorum ars, Ars Jocularia*, &c.] — “On peut comprendre sous le nom de JONGLERIE tout ce qui appartient aux anciens chansonniers Provençaux, Normands, Picards, &c. Le corps de la Jonglerie estoit formé des *Trouveres*, ou *Troubadours*, qui composoient les chansons, et parmi lesquels il y avoit des *Improvisateurs*, comme on en trouve en *Italie*; des *Chanteurs* ou *Chanteres* qui executoient ou chantoient ces compositions; des *Conteurs* qui faisoient en vers ou en prose les contes, les recits, les histoires; des *Jongleurs* ou *Menestrels* qui accompagnoient de leurs instrumens. — L’art de ces Chantres ou Chansonniers, estoit nommé la Science Gaie, *Gay Saber*.” (Pref. Anthologie Franç. 1765. 8vo. p. 17.) — See also the

* Vid. infra, Not. A 2.

the curious FAUCHET (*De l'Orig. de la Lang. Fr. p. 72, &c.*) “ Bien tost apres la division de ce grand empire
 “ François en tant de petits royaumes, duches, &
 “ comtez, au lieu des Poetes commencerent a se faire
 “ cognoistre les *Trouverres*, et *Chanterres*, *Conteurs*, et
 “ *Juglours*: qui sont Trouveurs, Chantres, Conteurs,
 “ JONGLEURS, ou JUGLEURS, c'est à dire, MENE-
 “ STRIERS chantans avec la viole.”

We see then that *Jongleur*, *Jugleur*, (Lat. *Joculator*, *Juglator*) was the peculiar name appropriated to the Minstrels. “ *Les Jongleurs ne faisoient que chanter les poësies sur leurs instrumens. On les appelloit aussi MENESTRELS:*” says Fontenelle, in his *Hist. du Theat. Franç.* prefixed to his Life of Corneille.

(C) “ Successors of the ancient BARDS.”] That the MINSTRELS in many respects bore a strong resemblance both to the British BARDS and to the Danish SCALDS, appears from this, that the old Monkish writers express them all without distinction by the same names in Latin. Thus Geoffery of Monmouth, himself a Welshman, speaking of an old pagan British king, who excelled in singing and music, so far as to be esteemed by his countrymen the Patron Deity of the BARDS, uses the phrase *Deus JOCULATORUM*; which is the peculiar name given to the English and French Minstrels†. In like manner, William of Malmesbury, speaking of a Danish king's assuming the profession of a SCALD, expresses it by, *Professus MIMUM*; which was another name given to the Minstrels in Middle Latinity*. Indeed Du CANGE, in his Glossary, quotes a writer, who positively asserts that the MINSTRELS of the middle ages were the samewith the ancient BARDS. I shall give a large extract from this learned glossographer, as he relates many curious particulars concerning the profession and arts of the Minstrels; whom, after the monks, he stigmatizes by the name of *Scurræ*; though he acknowledges their songs often tended to inspire virtue.

“ MINI

† Vid. Not. B. K. Q.

* Vid. Not. N.

“MINISTRELLI, dicti præsertim *Scurræ*, Mimi, Joculariores.” “Ejusmodi *Scurrarum* munus erat principes non suis duntaxat ludicris oblectare, sed et eorum aures variis avorum, adeoque ipsorum principum laudibus, non sine ASSENTATIONE, cum cantilenis & musicis instrumentis demulcere. . . .

“Interdum etiam virorum insignium & heroum gesta, aut explicata & jocunda narratione commemorabant, aut suavi vocis inflexione, fidibusque decantabant, quo sic dominorum, cæterorumque qui his intererant ludicris, nobilium animos ad VIRTUTEM capeffendam, et summorum virorum imitationem accenderent: quod fuit olim apud Gallos Bardorum ministerium, ut auctor est Tacitus. Neque epim alios à *Ministrellis*, veterum Gallorum *Bardos* fuisse pluribus probat Henricus Valesius ad 15 Ammiani.

“Nicolaus de Braia describens solenne convivium, quo post inaugurationem suam proceres excepit Lud. VIII. rex Francorum, ait inter ipsius convivij apparatus, in medium prodiisse MIMUM, qui regis laudes ad cytharam decantavit.” —

Our author then gives the lines at length, which begin thus,

“Dumque foveat genium geniali munere Bacchi,
 “Nectare commixto curas removere Lyæo
 “Principis a facie, citharæ celeberrimus arte
 “Assurgit MIMUS, ars musica quem decoravit.
 “Hic ergo chorda resonante subintulit ista:
 “Inclyte rex regum, probitatis stemmate vernans,
 “Quem vigor & virtus extollit in æthera famæ, &c.

The rest may be seen in Du Cange, who thus proceeds,
 “Mitto reliqua similia, ex quibus omnino patet ejusmodi Mimorum & Ministrellorum cantilenas ad virtutem principes excitasse. . . . Id præsertim in pugna præcinctu, dominis suis occinebant, ut martium ardo.

“rem

“rem in eorum animis concitarent : cujusmodi cantum
 “*Cantilenam Rollandi* appellat Will. Malmesb. lib. 3.
 “—Aimoinus, lib. 4. de Mirac. S. Bened. c. 37.
 “*Tanta vero illis securitas . . . ut SCURRAM se precedere*
 “*facerent, qui musico instrumento res fortiter gestas et prio-*
 “*rum bella præcineret, quatenus his acrius incitarentur,*
 “&c.” As the writer was a monk, we shall not wonder at his calling the Minstrel, *Scurram*.

(D) “The **BARDS** in Gaul, Britain, Ireland, and
 “the North . . . held in rude admiration.”] For a
 more full account of the **SCALDS** or **BARDS** of the ancient
DANES, the reader may consult the books referred to in
 pag. 4, note (II). and he may see specimens of their
 composition in almost all the ancient writers of Scandi-
 navian history; not to mention the “Five pieces of
 “Runic Poetry,” &c.

Concerning the **BARDS** of **GAUL**, See *Pelloutier Hist.*
des Celtes, Tom. I. L. 2. c. 9. No remains of their poetry
 are now extant; but as for those of **BRITAIN** and **IRE-**
LAND, they have been more fortunate. A curious ac-
 count of the ancient **WELSH BARDS** may be seen in
GIRALDI CAMBRENSIS Cambriæ Descript. Lond. 1585,
 12mo. Dr. **POWEL’s Hist. of Wales, by Wynne**, 1697, &c.
 and Specimens of their Poetry in the late publication
 of the learned Mr. **EVAN EVANS**, in 4to. 1764.—For
 an account of the **IRISH Bards**, the curious reader may
 consult O **CONNOR’s “Dissertations on the Hist. of**
“Ireland.” Dublin, 1766, 8vo. **SPENCER’s “View**
“of the State of Ireland,” &c. &c. But no pieces of
 their poetry have been translated, unless their claim
 may be allowed to those beautiful pieces of **ERSE POE-**
SY, which were lately given to the world in an Eng-
 lish dress by Mr. **MAC-PHERSON**: Several fragments of
 which the editor of this book has heard sung in the
 original language, and translated *vivâ voce*, by a native
 of the Highlands, who had, at the time, no opportu-
 nity of consulting Mr. Macpherson’s book.

(E) "The Poet and the Minstrel early with us became two persons."] The word SCALD comprehended both characters among the Danes, nor do I know that they had any peculiar name for either of them separate. But it was not so with the Anglo-Saxons. They called a POET *Scēop*, and *Leodpyra*: the last of these comes from *Leod*, a SONG; and the former answers to our old word MAKER (Gr. *Ποιητής*) being derived from *Scippan* or *Scēopan*, *formare*, *facere*, *ingere*, *creare* (Ang. to shape). As for the MINSTREL, they distinguished him by the peculiar appellation of *Lihzma*, and perhaps by the more simple title of *pear-pene*, Harper: [See below, notes H, I.] This last title, at least, is often given to a Minstrel by our most ancient English rhymists. See *Ancient Songs*, &c. vol. 1. p. 69, &c. vol. 3. p. 43, &c.

(F) "The Minstrels were still hospitably received, &c." Du Cange affirms, that, in the middle ages, the courts of princes swarmed so much with this kind of men, and such large sums were expended in maintaining and rewarding them, that they often drained the royal treasuries: especially, he adds, of such as were delighted with their flatteries (*præsertim qui ejusmodi Ministrellorum assentationibus delectabantur*.) He then confirms his assertion by several passages out of monastic writers, who sharply inveigh against this extravagance. Of these I shall here select only one or two, which show what kinds of rewards were bestowed on these old Songsters.

"*Rigordus de Gestis Philippi Aug. an. 1185. "Cum in curiis regum seu aliorum principum, frequens turba HISTRIONUM convenire soleat, ut ab eis AURUM, ARGENTUM, EQUOS, seu VESTES, quos persæpe mutare consueverunt principes, ab eis extorqueant, verba Jocularia variis adulationibus plena proferre nituntur. Et ut magis placeant, quicquid de ipsis principibus probabiliter fingi potest, videlicet omnes delitias et lepores, et visu dignas urbanitates et cæteras ineptias, trutinantibus*
" *buccis*

“buccis in medium eructare non erubescunt. Vidimus quon-
 “dam quosdam principes, qui VESTES diu excogitatas, et
 “variis florum picturationibus artificiosè elaboratas, pro
 “quibus forsan 20 vel 30 marchas argenti consumpserant,
 “vix revolutis septem diebus HISTRIONIBUS, ministris
 “diaboli, ad primam vocem dedisse, &c.”

The curious reader may find a similar, though at the
 same time a more candid account, in that most excel-
 lent writer, Presid. FAUCHET: (*Recueil de la lang. Fr.*
 p. 73.) who says, that, like the ancient Greek *Aoidoi*,
 “Nos Trouverres, ainsi que ceux la, prenans leur sub-
 “ject sur les faits des vaillans (qu’ils appelloient Geste,
 “venant de *Gesta*, Latin) alloient . . . par les cours re-
 “jouir les Princes . . . Rempörtans des grandes re-
 “compences des seigneurs, qui bien souvent leur don-
 “noient jusques aux ROBES qu’ils avoient vestues: &
 “lesquelles ces Juggleours ne failloient de porter aux
 “autres cours, à fin d’inviter les seigneurs a pareille
 “liberalité. Ce qui à durè si longuement, qu’il me
 “souvient AVOIR VEU Martin Baraton (ja viel Me-
 “nestrier d’Orleans) lequel aux festes et nopces batoit
 “un tabourin d’argent, semé des plaques aussi d’ar-
 “gent, gravees des armoiries de ceux a qui il avoit
 “appris a DANSER*.”

Fontenelle even gives us to understand, that these
 men were often rewarded with favours of a still higher
 kind. “Les princesses & les plus grandes dames y
 “joignoient souvent leurs faveurs. Elles estoient fort
 “foible contre les beaux esprits.” (*Hist. du Theat.*) We
 are not to wonder then that this profession should be fol-
 lowed by men of the first quality, particularly the younger
 sons and brothers of great houses. “Tel qui par les
 “partages de sa famille n’avoit que la moitié ou le
 “quart d’une vieux chateaux bien seigneurial, alloit
 “quelque temps courir le monde en rimant, et reve-
 “noit

* Here we see that a Minstrel performed sometimes the function
 of a Dancing-Master.

“noit acquirir le reste de Chateau.” (*Fontenelle Hist. du Theat.*) We see then, that there was no improbable fiction in those ancient Songs and Romances, which are founded on the story of Minstrels being beloved by kings daughters, &c. and discovering themselves to be the sons of some sovereign prince, &c.

The honours and rewards lavished upon the Minstrels were not confined to the continent: Our own countryman Johannes Sarisburiensis (in the time of Henry II;) declaims no less than the monks abroad, against the extravagant favour shewn to these men. *Non enim more nugatorum ejus seculi in HISTRIONES, & MIMOS, et hujusmodi monstra hominum, ob famæ redemptionem & dilationem nominis effunditis opes vestras, &c.* [Epist. 247.*]

The Monks seem to grudge every act of munificence that was not applied to the benefit of themselves and their convents. They therefore bestow great applauses upon the Emperour Henry, who, at his marriage with Agnes of Poitou, in 1044, disappointed the poor Minstrels, and sent them away empty. *Infinitam Histrionum, & Joculatorum multitudinem, sine cibo & muneribus vacuum & mærentem abire permisit.* (*Chronic. Virtzburg.*) For which I doubt not but he was sufficiently stigmatized in the songs and ballads of those times. Vid. Du Cange, Gloss. tom. 4. p. 771, &c.

(G) “The annals of the Anglo-Saxons are scanty and defective.”] Of the few histories now remaining, that were written before the Norman conquest, almost all are such short and naked sketches and abridgments, giving only a concise and general relation of the more remarkable events, that scarce any of the minute circumstantial particulars are to be found in them: nor do they hardly ever descend to a description of the customs, manners, or domestic œconomy of their countrymen. The SAXON CHRONICLE, for instance, which is the best of them, and upon some accounts extremely valuable, is almost such an epitome

* Et vid. Policraticon, Cap. 8, &c.

as Lucius Florus and Eutropius have left us of the Roman history. As for ETHELWARD, his book is judged to be an imperfect translation of the Saxon chronicle, and the *Pseudo-Aſſer* or Chronicle of St. Neot is a poor defective performance. How absurd would it be then to argue against the existence of customs or facts, from the silence of such scanty records as these? Whoever would carry his researches deep into that period of history, might safely plead the excuse of a learned writer, who had particularly studied the Anté-Norman historians: "*Conjecturis (licet nusquam sine verisimili fundamento) aliquoties indulgemus . . . utpote ab Historicis jejune nimis & indiligenter res nostras tractantibus coacti . . . Nostri . . . nuda factorum commemoratione plerumque contenti, reliqua omnia, sive ob ipsarum rerum, sive meliorum literarum, sive Historicorum officii ignorantiam, fere intacta prætereunt.*" Vide plura in Præfat. ad *Ælfr. Vitam a Spelman. Ox. 1678. fol.*

(H) "Minstrels and Harpers." That the HARP (*Cithara*) was the common musical instrument of the Anglo-Saxons, might be inferred from the very word itself, which is not derived from the British, or any other Celtic language, but of genuine Gothic original, and current among every branch of that people: viz. Ang.-Sax. *peappe*; *peappa*. Iceland. *Harpa*; *Haurpa*. Dan. and Belg. *Harpe*. Germ. *Harpfz*, *Harpfza*. Gal. *Harpe*. Span. *Harpa*. Ital. *Arpa*. [Vid. Jun. Etym. — Menage Etym. &c.] As also from this, that the word *peappe* is constantly used in the Anglo-Saxon versions, to express the Latin words *Cithara*, *Lyra*, and even *Cymbalum*: the word *Psalmus* itself being sometimes translated *peapp-rang*, HARP-SONG. [*Gloss. Jun. R. apud Lye Anglo-Sax. Lex.*]

But the fact itself is positively proved by the express testimony of Bede, who tells us that it was usual at festival meetings for this instrument to be handed round, and each of the company to sing to it in his turn. See

c

his

* Vid. Nicholson's Eng. Hist. Libr. &c.

his *Hist. Eccles. Anglor. Lib. 4. c. 24.* where speaking of their sacred poet Cædmon, who lived in the times of the Heptarchy (ob. circ. 680.) he says :

"Nihil unquam frivoli & supervacui poematis facere potuit; sed ea tantummodo, quæ ad religionem pertinent, religiosam ejus linguam decebant. Siquidem in habitu seculari, usque ad tempora proventioris ætatis constitutus, nil Carminum aliquando didicerat. Unde nonnunquam in convivio, cum esset lætitiæ causa ut omnes per ordinem CANTARE deberent, ille ubi appropinquare sibi CITHARAM cernebat, surgebat a mediâ cænâ, et egressus ad suam domum repedabat."

I shall now subjoin king ALFRED's own Anglo-Saxon translation of this passage, with a literal interlineary English version.

De . . . næfre noht leaunga. ne ðelef leoðer pýncean ne
He . . . never no leasings, nor idle songs compose ne

mihte. ac efne ða an ða ðe to æfettnerre belumpon. 7
might; but so! only those things which to religion [piety] belong, and

hæf ða æfettan tunzan gebafenode ringan: þær he se man
his then pious tongue became to sing: He was the [a] man

in weorold-hæbe gerefed oð ða tîde de he wæs of gely-
in worldly [secular] state set to the time in which he was of an

feðpe ylðo. 7 he næfre ænig leoþ geleornode. 7 he
advanced age; and he never any song learned. And he

forþon oft in gebeornscipe ðonne ðær wæs blisse intinga
therefore oft in an entertainment when there [it] was for merriment-sake

gebemed. þ hi ealle sceolban ðuph endebýrðnerre
adjudged [or decreed], that they ALL should through their turns

bé hearnpan ringan. ðonne he gereah ða hearnpan him nea-
by [to the] HARP sing; when he saw the HARP him ap-

læcan.

læcan. ðonne aþar he for sceome fram ðam rymle. 7 ham
proach, then arose he FOR SHAME from the supper, and beme-
eode to his huse.
yode [went] to his house."

Bed. Hist. Eccl. a Smith. Cantab. 1722. fol. p. 597.

In this version of Alfred's it is observable, (1) that he has expressed the Latin word *cantare*, by the Anglo-Saxon words "be heortpan ringan," SING TO THE HARP; as if they were synonymous, or as if his countrymen had no idea of Singing unaccompanied with the Harp: (2) That when Bede simply says, *surgebat a medio cœ-
næ*; he assigns a motive, "aþar for sceome," AROSE FOR SHAME: plainly signifying, that to sing and play on the Harp was so common and universal a practice, that it was a Shame for any man not to be able to do it; and he that was unpossessed of this accomplishment, could not stay in company without exposing himself to contempt.

(1) "The word continues still in our language, "&c."] This is the word GLEE; which is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *Glægg*, [*Gligg*] *Musica*; MUSIC, *Minstrelle* (Somn.). This is the common radix, whence arise such a variety of terms and phrases relating to the Minstrel-Art, as afford the strongest internal proof, that this profession was extremely common and popular here before the Norman conquest. Thus we have

I.

(1) *Glip*, *Mimus*, a MINSTREL.

Glizman, *glizmon*, *gliman*, [*Glee-man*] *Histrion*, *Mimus*, *Pantomimus*; all common names in Middle-Latinity for a MINSTREL: and Somner accordingly renders the original by a *Minstrel*; a Player on a tuncel or taber. He adds, a *Fidler*; but this is giving a modern idea: occasioned by the word *Fidicen*; by which the orig. has been also rendered:

Ēlīimen, ġlīigmen. [Glee-men.] *Histriones*, MINSTRELS.
Hence

Ēlīgmanna-ȝppe. *Orchestra*, vel *Pulpitus*. The place where the Minstrels exhibited their performances.

(2) BUT their most proper and expressive name was

Ēlīphleopriend. *Musicus*, a Minstrel; and

Ēlīphleopriendlica. *Musicus*, MUSICAL.

These two words include the full idea of the Minstrel character, expressing at once their Music and Singing, being compounded of Ēlīp, *Musicus*, *Mimus*, a MUSICIAN, MINSTREL; and Leoð, *Carmen*, a SONG.

(3) From the above word Ēlīgg, the profession itself was called

Ēlīgcræft. [Glig or Glee-craft.] *Musica*, *Histrionia*, *Mimica Gesticulatio*: Which Somner rightly gives in English, Minstrelsy, Mimical Gesticulation, Mummery. He also adds Stage-playing; but here again, I think he substitutes an idea too modern; induced by the word *Histrionia*, which in Middle Latinity only signifies the Minstrel-art.

However it should seem, that both mimical gesticulation and a kind of rude exhibition of characters were sometimes attempted by the old Minstrels: But

(4) As Musical Performance was the leading idea, so

Ēlīopian, is *Cantus Musicos edere*; and

Ēlīgbeam, ġlīpbeam. [Glig or Glee-beam] *Tympanum*; a *Timbrel* or *Taber*. (So Somn.) Hence

Ēlīȝpian. *Tympanum pulsare*; and

Ēlīp-meden; ġlīȝpiende-maden; [Glee-maiden] *Tympanistria*: which Somner renders a *She-Minstrel*; for it should seem, that they had Females of this profession: One name for which was also Ēlīȝȝyðeneſtrea.

(5) Of congenial derivation to the foregoing is

Ēlīȝc. *Tibia*, a PIPE or FLUTE.

Both this and the common radix *Glegg*, are with great appearance of truth derived by Junius from the Icelandic *Gliggur*, *Flatus*; as supposing that the first attempts at Music among our Gothic ancestors, were from Wind-instruments. Vid. Jun. Etym. Ang. V. GLEE.

II.

But the Minstrels, as is hinted above, did not confine themselves to the mere exercise of their primary arts of Music and Song, but occasionally used many other modes of diverting. Hence from the above Root was derived, in a secondary sense,

(1) *Gleo*, and *pinsum glip*. *Facetiæ*.

Gleopian. *jocari*; to jest, or be merry; (Somn.) and

Gleopiend. *jocans*; jesting, speaking merrily; (Somn.)

Gligman, also signified *Jocista*, a JESTER.

Glig-gamen. [Glee-games.] *joci*. Which Somner renders, Merriments, or merry Jest; Tricks, or Sports; Gambols.

(2) Hence again, by a common metonymy of the Cause for the Effect,

Glie, *gaudium*, *alacritas*, *letitia*, *facetiæ*; Joy, Mirth, Gladness, Cheerfulness, Glee. [Somner.] Which last application of the word still continues, though rather in a low debasing sense,

III.

But however agreeable and delightful the various arts of the Minstrels might be to the Anglo-Saxon laity, there is reason to believe, that, before the Norman conquest at least, they were not much favoured by the clergy; particularly by those of monastic profession. For, not to mention that the sportive talents of these men would be considered by these austere ecclesiastics, as tending

to levity and licentiousness, the Pagan origin of their art would excite in the monks an insuperable prejudice against it. The Anglo-Saxon **HARPERS** and **GLEEMEN** were the immediate successors and imitators of the Scandinavian **SCALDS**; who were the great promoters of Pagan superstition, and fomented that spirit of cruelty and outrage in their countrymen the Danes, which fell with such peculiar severity on the religious and their convents.—Hence arose a third application of words derived from **Glyg**, **MINSTRELSY**, in a very unfavourable sense, and this chiefly prevails in books of religion and ecclesiastic discipline. Thus

(1) **Glyg**, is *Ludibrium*, LAUGHING TO SCORN. So in S. Basil. Regul. 11. þ1 hæfðon him to glyge halpende minegunge. *Ludibrio habebant salutarem ejus admonitionem.* (10.)—This sense of the word was perhaps not ill-founded; for as the SPORT of rude uncultivated minds often arises from ridicule, it is not improbable but the old Minstrels often indulged a vein of this sort, and that of no very delicate kind. So again,

Glyg-man, was also used to signify *Scurra*, a saucy Jester (Somn.)

Glyg-georn. *Dicax*, *Scurriles jocos supra quam par est amans.* *Officium Episcopale*, 3.

Glypian. *Scurrilibus oblectamentis indulgere; Scurram agere.* Canon. Edgar. 58.

(2) Again, as the various attempts to please, practised by an order of men who owed their support to the public favour, might be considered by those grave censors, as mean and debasing: Hence came from the same root,

Glypen. *Parasitus*, *Assentator**; a flatterer, a Cogger, a Parasite, a flatterer. (Somn.)

IN

* The preceding list of Anglo-Saxon words, so full and copious beyond any thing that ever yet appeared in print on this subject, is extracted

IN so unfavourable a light were the Minstrels considered by the Anglo-Saxon clergy; but, after the Norman conquest, when the Pagan origin of their art was forgot; and when perhaps a greater laxity of manners prevailed among some of the ecclesiastics; these men do not seem to have regarded them every where with so evil an eye: for there is even room to think, that they admitted them here to some of the inferior honours of the clerical character; as the Tonsure for instance [see above, Note (A)]; but this is mentioned as mere conjecture.

IV.

To return to the Anglo-Saxon word *Ellyg*: Notwithstanding the various secondary senses in which this word (as we have seen above) was so early applied; yet

The derivative GLEE (though now chiefly used to express Merriment and Joy) long retained its first simple meaning, and is even applied by Chaucer to signify MUSIC and MINSTRELSY. (Vid. Jun. Etym.) E. g.

“ For though that the best harper upon live

“ Would on the best sounid jolly harpe

“ That evir was, with all his fingers five

“ Touch aie o string, or aie o warble harpe,

“ Were his nailes poincted nevir so sharpe

“ It shoulde makin every wight to dull

“ To heare is GLEE, and of his strokes full.

Troyl. L. II. 1030.

Junius interprets GLEES by *Musica Instrumenta*, in the following passages of Chaucer's THIRD BOKE of FAME.

c 4

“ . . Stoden

extracted from Mr. Lye's curious ANGLO-SAXON LEXICON, now printing by a very scanty and inadequate subscription; though it is one of the completest and noblest works that ever was undertaken to display the originals of any language.

"... Stoden .. the castell all aboutin
 " Of all maner of MYNSTRALES,
 " And JESTOURS that tellen tales
 " Both of wepyng and of game,
 " And of all that longeth unto same;
 " There herde I play on a harpe
 " That fownded both well and sharpe
 " Hym Orpheus full craftily;
 " And on this syde fast by
 " Sate the harper Orion;
 " And Eacides Chirion;
 " And other harpers many one,
 " And the Briton GLASKYRION.

After mentioning these, the great masters of the art, he proceeds;

" And small Harpers with her GLEES
 " Sat under them in divers fees.

* * * *

Again, a little below, the poet having enumerated the performers on all the different sorts of instruments, adds,

" There sawe I fyt in other fees
 " Playing upon other sundry GLEES,
 " Which that I cannot neven *
 " Mo than starres ben in heven, &c.

Upon the above lines I shall only make a few observations:

(1) That we have here mention made of an order of Minstrels, who told both tragic and comic stories, called JESTOURS: which I suppose should be GLESTOURS;

* Neven, i. e. name.

TOURS; sc. the relators of GESTS (Lat. *Gesta*) or adventures in prose. These were evidently what the French called *Conteurs*, or Story-tellers, and to them we are doubtless indebted for the first Prose Romances of chivalry; which may be considered as specimens of their manner.

(2) That the "Briton GLASKERYON," whoever he was, is apparently the same person with our famous Harper GLASGERION, of whom the reader will find a tragical ballad, in Vol. III. pag. 43.—In that song may be seen an instance of what was advanced above in note (F), of the dignity of the Minstrel profession, or at least of the artifice with which the Minstrels endeavoured to set off its importance.

Thus "a king's son is represented as appearing in the character of a Harper or Minstrel in the court of another king. He wears a collar (or gold chain) as a person of illustrious rank; rides on horseback, and is admitted to the embraces of a king's daughter."

The Minstrels lost no opportunity of doing honour to their art.

(3) As for the word GLEES, it is to this day used in a musical sense, and applied to a peculiar piece of composition. Who has not seen the advertisements, proposing a reward to him who should produce the best Catch, Canon, or GLEE?

(K) "Comes from the pen of Geoffery of Monmouth." Geoffery's own words are, "*Cum ergo alterius modi aditum [Baldulphus] non haberet, rasit capillos suos & barbam, cultumque JOCULATORIS cum Cythara fecit. Deinde intra castra deambulans, modulis quos in Lyra componebat, sese CYTHARISTAM exhibebat.*" Galf. Monum. Hist. 4to. 1508. Lib. 7. c. 1.—That *Joculator* signifies precisely a MINSTREL, appears not only from this passage, where it is used as a word of like import to *Citharista* or HARPER, (which was the old English word for a Minstrel), but also from another passage

passage of the same author, where it is applied as equivalent to *Cantor*. See Lib. 1. cap. 22. where, speaking of an ancient (perhaps fabulous) British king, he says, "*Hic omnes CANTORES quos præcedens ætas habuerat & in modulis & in omnibus musicis instrumentis excedebat; ita ut Deus JOCULATORUM videretur.*"—Whatever credit is due to Geoffery as a relater of FACTS, he is certainly as good authority as any for the signification of WORDS.

(L) "Two remarkable facts."] Both these facts are recorded by WILLIAM of MALMESBURY: and the first of them (relating to ALFRED), by INGULPHUS also. Now Ingulphus (afterwards abbot of Croyland) was near forty years of age at the time of the conquest *, and consequently was as proper a judge of the Saxon manners, as if he had actually written his history before that event; he is therefore to be considered as an Anti-norman writer: so that whether the fact concerning Alfred be true or not, we are assured from his testimony, that the *Joculator* or MINSTREL was a common character among the Anglo-Saxons. The same also may be inferred from the relation of WILLIAM of MALMESBURY, who outlived INGULPHUS but about 30 years †. Both these writers had doubtless recourse to innumerable records and authentic memorials of the Anglo-Saxon times, which never descended down to us; their testimony therefore is too positive and full to be overturned by the mere silence of the two or three slight Anglo-Saxon epitomes, that are now remaining. (Vid. not. (G)).

As for ASSER MENEVENSIS, who has given a somewhat more particular detail of Alfred's actions, and yet takes no notice of the following story; it will not be difficult to account for his silence, if we consider that

* Natus, 1030. scripsit, 1091. obit, 1109. Tanner.

† Obit, Anno 1142. Tanner.

he was a rigid monk, and that the Minstrels, however acceptable to the laity, were never much respected by men of the more strict monastic profession, especially before the Norman conquest, when they would be considered as brethren of the Pagan Scalds *. After therefore might not regard Alfred's skill in Minstrelsy in a very favourable light; and might be induced to drop the circumstance related below, as reflecting in his opinion no great honour on his patron.

The learned Editor of Alfred's life in Latin, after having examined the scene of action in person, and weighed all the circumstances of the event, determines from the whole collective evidence, that Alfred could never have gained the victory he did, if he had not with his own eyes previously seen the disposition of the enemy by such a stratagem as is here described. *Vid. Annot. in Ælfr. Mag. Vitam, p. 33. Oxon. 1678. fol.*

(M) " Alfred . . . assumed the dress and character of " a Minstrel."] *Fingens se JOCLATOREM, assumpta cithara, &c. Ingulphi Hist. p. 869.—Sub specie MIMI . . . ut JOCLATORIÆ professor artis. Gul. Malmesb. l. 2. c. 4. p. 43.* That both *Joculator* and *Mimus* signify literally, a MINSTREL, see proved in notes B. K. N. Q. &c. &c.

Malmesbury adds, *Unius tantum fidelissimi fruebatur conscientia.* As this Confidant does not appear to have assumed the disguise of a Minstrel himself, I conclude that he only appeared as the Minstrel's attendant. Now that the Minstrel had sometimes his Servant or attendant to carry his harp, and even to sing to his music, we have many instances in the old Metrical Romances, and even some in this present collection: See Ancient Songs, &c. Vol. I. p. 57. 65. Vol. III. p. 44, &c. Among the

* (See above, p. liv.) Both Ingulph. and Will. of Malmesb. had been very conversant among the Normans; who could have had no such prejudices against the Minstrels as the Anglo-Saxons had.

French and Provençal bards, the *Trouverre* or Inventor, was generally attended with his Singer, who sometimes also played on the Harp, or other musical instrument.

“*Quelque fois durant le repas d'un prince on voyoit arriver un Trouverre inconnu avec ses Menestrels ou Jongleurs, et il leur faisoit chanter sur leurs Harpes ou Vieilles les Vers qu'il avoit composés. Ceux qui faisoient les sons aussi bien que les mots étoient les plus estimés.*” Fontenelle Hist. du Theatr.

That ALFRED excelled in Music is positively asserted by BALE, who doubtless had it from some ancient MS. many of which subsisted in his time, that are now lost : as also by Sir J. SPELMAN, who we may conclude had good authority for this anecdote, as he is known to have compiled his life of Alfred from authentic materials collected by his learned father : this writer informs us, that Alfred “provided himself of musitians, not common, or such as knew but the practick part, but men skilful in the art itself, whose skill and service he yet further improved with his own instruction.” p. 199. This proves Alfred at least to have understood the Theory of Music ; and how could this have been acquired without practising on some instrument : Which, we have seen above, [Note (H)] was so extremely common with the Anglo-Saxons, even in much ruder times, that Alfred himself plainly tells us, it was SHAMEFUL to be ignorant of it. And this commonness might be one reason, why ASSER did not think it of consequence enough to be particularly mentioned in his short life of that great monarch. This rigid monk may also have esteemed it a slight and frivolous accomplishment, favouring only of worldly vanity. He has however particularly recorded Alfred's fondness for the oral Anglo-Saxon poems and songs [*Saxonica poemata die noctuque . . . audiens . . . memoriter retinebat.* p. 16. *Carmina Saxonica memoriter discere, &c.* p. 43. & ib.] Now the Poems learnt by rote, among all ancient unpolished

polished nations, are ever Songs chanted by the reciter, and accompanied with instrumental melody*.

(N) "With his Harp in his hand, and dressed like a "MINSTREL."] *Assumptâ manu citbarâ . . . professus MIMUM, qui hujusmodi arte stipem quotidianam mercatur . . . Jussus abire pretium CANTUS accepit.* Malmesb. l. 2. c. 6. We see here that which was rewarded was (NOT any mimicry or tricks, but) his SINGING (*Cantus*); this proves beyond dispute, what was the nature of the entertainment he afforded them. Perhaps it is needless by this time to prove to the Reader, that *Mimus* in Middle Latinity signifies a Minstrel, and *Mimia*, Minstrelsy, or the Minstrel-art. Should he doubt it, let him cast his eye over the two following extracts from Du Cange.

"MIMUS: Musicus, qui instrumentis musicis canit. Leges Palatinæ Jacobi II. Reg. Majoric. In domibus principum, ut tradit antiquitas, MIMI seu Foculatores licitè possunt esse. Nam illorum officium tribuit lætitiâ. . . . Quapropter volumus & ordinamus, quod in nostra curia MIMI debeant esse quinque, quorum duo sint tubicinatores, & tertius sit tabelerius: [i. e. a player on the tabor*.] Lit. remiss. ann. 1374. Ad MIMOS cornitantes, seu bucinantes accesserunt."

MIMIA,

* Thus *Leoð*, the Saxon word for a Poem, is properly a Song, and its derivative *Lied* signifies a Ballad to this day in the German tongue: And *Cantare* we have seen above is by Alfred himself rendered, *Be heapan ringan*.

† The TABOUR or TABOURIN was a common instrument with the French Minstrels, as it had also been with the Anglo-Saxon (*vid. p. lii.*): thus in an ancient Fr. MS. in the Harl. collection (2253. 75.) a Minstrel is described as riding on horseback, and bearing his TABOUR.

*Entour son col porta son TABOUR,
Depeynt de Or, e riche Ajour.*

See also a passage in Menage's Diction. Etym. [v. MENESTRIERS.] where *Tabours* is used as synonymous to *Menestriers*.

Another

MIMIA, Ludus Mimicus, Instrumentum. [potius, Ars Joculatoria.] Ann. 1482. . . . "MIMIA & "cantu victum acquirō."

Du Cange, Gloss. Tom. iv. 762. Supp. c. 1275.

(O) "To have been a Dane." The northern historians produce such instances of the great respect shewn to the Danish SCALDS in the courts of our Anglo-Saxon kings, on account of their Musical and Poetic talents, (notwithstanding they were of so hateful a nation) that, if a similar order of men had not existed here before, we cannot doubt but the profession would have been taken up by such of the natives as had a genius for poetry and music.

"Extant Rhythmi hoc ipso [Islandico] idiomate ANGLIÆ, Hybernique Regibus oblatis & liberaliter contemplati, &c. Itaque hinc colligi potest linguam Danicam in aulis vicinorum regum, principumque familiarem fuisse, non secus ac hodie in aulis principum peregrina idioma in deliciis haberi cernimus. — Imprimis Vita Egilli Skallagrimii id in-victo argumento adstruit. Quippe qui interrogatus ab ADALSTEINO, Angliæ rege, quomodo manus Eirici Blodoxii, Northumbriæ regis, postquam in ejus potestatem venerat, evasisset, cujus filium propinquosque occiderat, . . rei statim ordinem metro, nunc satis obscuro, exposuit, nequaquam ita narraturus non intelligenti." [Vid. plura apud Torfæii Præfat. ad Orcad. Hist. fol.]

This same EGILL was no less distinguished for his valour and skill as a soldier, than for his poetic and singing talents as a SCALD; and he was such a favourite with our king ATHELSTAN, that he at one time presented

Another frequent instrument with them was the VIELE, a kind of Lute or Guitar.

Il ot un Jougleor a Sens,

Qui navoit pas sovent robe entiere;

Sovent estoit sans sa VIELE. Fabliaux & Cont. II. 184, 5.

sented him with “ *duobus annulis & seriniis duobus bene magnis, argento repletis. . . . Quinetiam hoc addidit, ut Egillus quidvis præterea a se petens, obtineret: bona mobilia, sive immobilia, præbendam vel præfecturas. Egillus porro regiam munificentiam gratus excipiens, Carmen Encomiasticum, à se, linguâ Norvegicâ, (quæ tum his regnis communis) compositum, regi dicat: ac pro eo, duas Marcas auri puri (pondus Marcæ . . . 8 uncioꝝ æquabat) honorarii loco retulit.*” [Arngr. Jon. Rer. Islandic. Lib. 2. p. 129.]

See more of EGILL, in “The Five Pieces of Runic Poetry, &c. p. 45. &c.

(P) “If the Saxons had not been accustomed to have Minstrels of their own . . . and to shew favour and respect to the Danish Scalds,”] If this had not been the case, we may be assured, at least, that the stories given in the text could never have been recorded by writers who lived so near the Anglo-Saxon times as Malmesbury and Ingulphus, who, though they might be deceived as to particular Facts, could not be so as to the general Manners and Customs, which prevailed so near their own times among their ancestors.

(Q) “In Doomesday Book,” &c.] *Extract. ex Libro Domesday:*

Gloucestrescire.

Fol. 162. Col. 1. Werdie Joculator Regis habet iij villas, et ibi v. ear. nil redd.

That *Joculator* is properly a MINSTREL might be inferred from the two foregoing passages of Geoffery of Monmouth, (vid. p. lvij.) where the word is used as equivalent to *Citharista* in one place, and to *Cantor* in the other: this union forms the precise idea of the character.

But

But more positive proofs have already offered, *vid. supra*, p. 27. See also Du Cange's Gloss. Vol. III. c. 1543. "JOGULATOR pro Jocularor.—Consilium Masil. an. 1381. Nullus Ministreys, seu Jocularor, audeat pin-
"sare vel sonare instrumentum cujuscumque generis," &c. &c.

As the Minstrel was termed in French *Jongleur* and *Jugleur*; so he was called in Spanish *Jutglar* and *Juglar*. "Tenemos canciones y versos para recitar muy anti-
"guos y memorias ciertas de los JUGLARES, que assistian
"en los banquetes, como los quæ pinta Homero." Prolog. a las Comed. de Cervantes, 1749. 4to.

"El anno 1328. en las fiestas de la Coronacion del Rey,
"Don Alonso el IV. de Aragon, . . . † el JUGLAR RA-
"MASET cantò una Villanesca de la Composicion del . . in-
"fante [Don Pedro]: y otro JUGLAR, llamado NOVEL-
"LET, recitò y representò en voz y sin cantar mas de 600
"versos, que hizo el Infante en el metro, que llamaban
"RIMA VULGAR." Ibid.

"Los TROBADORES inventaron la GAYA Ciencia . . .
"estos TROBADORES, eran casi todos de la primera No-
"bleza. — Es verdad, que ya entonces se havian entro-
"metido entre las diversiones Cortesanos, los Contadores,
"los Cantores, los JUGLARES, los Truanes, y los Bu-
"fones." Ibid.

In England THE KING'S JUGLAR continued to have an establishment in the royal household down to the reign of Henry VIII. [*vid. Note (Cc)*] but whether the character was then precisely the same with that of the ancient *Jocularor Regis*, I have not been able to discover.

(R) "A valliant warrior, named TAILLEFER, &c."]
See Du Cange, who produces this as an instance,
"Quod

† ROMANSET JUTGLAR canta alt veux . . . davant lo senyor Rey.
Chron. d'Aragon. apud Du Cange. IV. 771.

“ *Quod Ministellorum munus interdum præstabant milites
probatissimi. Le Roman DE VACCE, MS.* ”

“ Quant il virent Normanz venir

“ Mout veiffiez Engleiz fremir. . . .

“ TAILLEFER qui mout bien chantoit,

“ Sur un cheval, qui tost alloit,

“ Devant euls aloit chantant

“ De Kallemaigne & de Roullant,

“ Et d' Olivier de Vassaux,

“ Qui moururent en Rainschevaux.

“ *Qui quidem TAILLEFER a Gulielmo obtinuit ut primus
in hostes irrueret, inter quos fortiter dimicando accubuit.* ”

Gloss. Tom. iv. 769, 770, 771.

“ Les anciennes chroniques nous apprennent, qu'en
premier rang de l' Armée Normande, un ecuyer
nommé *Taillefer*, monté sur un cheval armé,
chanta la chanson *De Roland*, qui fut si long tems
dans les bouches des Francois, sans qu'il soit resté
le moindre fragment. Le *Taillefer* apres avoir EN-
TONNE' le chanson que les soldats repetoient, se
jetta le premier parmi les Anglois, et fut tue.”

Voltaire. Add. Hist. Univers. p. 69. — (Observat.
on the Anc. Stat. 4to. p. 293.)

(8) “ An eminent French writer.” &c.] “ M. l'
Evêque de la Ravaliere, qui avoit fait beaucoup de
recherches sur nos anciennes Chançons, pretend que
c'est a la Normandie que nous devons nos premiers
Chançonniens, non a la Provence, et qu'il y avoit
parmi nous des Chançons en langue vulgaire avant
celles des Provençaus, mais posterieurement au Regne
de Philippe I, ou à l'an 1100*. Ce seroit une an-
d “ tériorité

* Revolutions de la Langue Françoisé, a l'a suite des POESIES DU
ROI DE NAVARRE.

☞ In pag. xxvii of the text, line 22. for “ above a century, ” read
“ near a century. ”

“ t  riorit   de plus d’un demi si  cle a l’  poque des pr  -
 “ miers Troubadours, que leur historien, *Jean de Nostre-*
 “ *dame*, fixe    l’an 1162, &c.” *Pref. a l’Anthologie*
Fran  . 8vo. 1765.

(T) “ The minstrel profession . . . acquire new pri-
 “ vileges,” &c.] See what has been already suggested
 in the preceding notes. See pag. 37, 38, 39, 43, &c.

The Reader will observe, that, in the foregoing part
 of this Essay, I am careful to trace the Descent of the
 French and English Minstrels only from the itinerant
 oral Poets of their Gothic ancestors the Franks and
 Saxons, and from the SCALDS of their Danish brethren
 in the North. For though the BARDS of the ancient
 Gauls and Britons might seem to have a claim of being
 considered as their more immediate predecessors and
 instructors; yet these, who were Celtic nations, were
ab origine so different a race of men from the others
 who were all of Gothic origin, that I think one cannot,
 in any degree, argue from the manners of the one to
 those of the other; and the conquering Franks, Saxons,
 and Danes, were much less likely to take up any
 customs from their enemies the Gauls and Britons, whom
 they every where expelled, extirpated, or enslaved,
 than to have received and transmitted them from their
 own Teutonic ancestors in the North, among whom
 such customs were known to have prevailed from the
 earliest ages.

(U) “ They celebrated him as the most accomplished
 “ monarch,” &c.] See Roger de Hoveden, (in Ri-
 cardo I.) who gives rather an invidious turn to this
 circumstance: “ *Hic ad augmentum et famam sui nominis,*
emendicata carmina, et rythmos adulatorios comparabat; et
de regno Francorum CANTORES et JOCLATORES mu-
neribus allegerat, ut de illo canerent in plateis: et jam di-
cebatur ubique, quod non erat talis in orbe.”

(V) “ That

(V) "That remarkable intercommunity, &c. between the French and English minstrels," &c.] This might, even in a great measure, be referred back perhaps to the Norman conquest itself, when along with their French language and manners, the victors doubtless brought with them all their native prejudices, opinions, and fables; which would not fail to be adopted by the English minstrels, who solicited their favour. This interchange, &c. between the Minstrels of the two nations, once begun, would be afterwards kept up by the great intercourse that was produced among all the nations of Christendom in the middle ages, by their uniting in the general Crusades; and by that spirit of Chivalry, which led the knights and their attendants, the heralds and minstrels, &c. to ramble about continually from one court to another, in order to be present at solemn tournaments, and other feats of arms.

(W) "The Minstrels under the protection of the family of Dutton, &c.]" See Statut. Anno 39. R. Eliz. Chap. IV. "An Act for punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars."

§ II. . . ' All Fencers, Bearwards, Common Players of Enterludes, and MINSTRELS, wandering abroad, (other than Players of Enterludes belonging to any Baron of this Realm, or any other honourable Personage of greater degree, to be authorised to play, under the hand and seal of arms of such Baron or Personage :) all JUGLERS †, Tinkers, Pedlers, &c. . . . shall be adjudged and deemed Rogues, Vagabonds, and Sturdy Beggars, &c.

§ X. Provided always that this Act, or any thing therein contained, or any authority thereby given, shall not in any wise extend to disinheret, prejudice,

d 2

' or

† What was the precise meaning of this word at that time, and in what respects the MINSTRELS and JUGLERS differed, I have not discovered.

‘ or hinder JOHN DUTTON of DUTTON in the County
 ‘ of Chester, Esquire, his heirs or assigns, for, touch-
 ‘ ing or concerning any liberty, preheminance, autho-
 ‘ rity, jurisdiction, or inheritance, which the said John
 ‘ Dutton now lawfully useth, or hath, or lawfully may
 ‘ or ought to use within the County-Palatine of Che-
 ‘ ster, and the County of the City of Chester, or either
 ‘ of them, by reason of any ancient Charters of any
 ‘ Kings of this Land, or by reason of any prescription,
 ‘ usage, or title whatsoever.’

The same Clauses are renewed in the last Act on this Subject, passed in the present Reign of GEO. III.

(X) “ Edward I. . . . at the knighting of his son,”
 &c.] See Nic. Triveti Annales, Oxon 1719. 8vo. p. 342.

“ *In festo Pentecostes Rex filium suum armis militaribus
 cinxit, & cum eo Comites Warenniæ & Arundeliæ,
 aliosque, quorum numerus ducentos & quadraginta dicitur
 excessisse. Eodem die cum sedisset Rex in mensa, novis mili-
 tibus circumdatus, ingressa MINISTRELLORUM MULTI-
 TUDO, portantium multiplici ornatu amictum, ut milites
 præcipue novos invitarent, & inducerent, ad vorendum
 factum armorum aliquod coram signo.*”

(Y) “ By an express regulation, &c.”] See in Hearne’s
 Append. ad Lelandi Collectan. Vol. VI. p. 36. “ A
 “ DIETARIE. Writtes published after the Ordinance of
 “ Earles and Barons, Anno Dom. 1315.”

‘ EDWARD by the grace of God, &c. to Sheriffes,
 ‘ &c. greetyng. Forasmuch as . . . many idle persons,
 ‘ under colour of MYNSTRELSIE, and going in mes-
 ‘ sages, and other faigned busyness, have ben and yet
 ‘ be receaved in other mens houses to meate and drynke,
 ‘ and be not therewith contented yf they be not largely
 ‘ confydered with gyftes of the Lordes of the houses:
 ‘ &c. . . . WE wyll yng to restrayne suche outrageous
 ‘ enterpryses and idlenes, &c. have ordeyned . . . that
 ‘ to the houses of Prelates, Earles and Barons none re-
 ‘ fort

† fort to meate and drynke, unlesse he be a MYNSTREL,
 † and of these MINSTRELS that there come none ex-
 † cept it be three or four MINSTRELS OF HONOUR at the
 † most in one day, unlesse he be desired of the Lorde of
 † the House. And to the houses of meaner men that
 † none come unlesse he be desired, and that such as shall
 † come so, holde themselves contented with meate and
 † drynke, and with such curtesie as the Maister of the
 † House wyl shewe unto them of his owne good wyll,
 † without their askyng of any thyng. And yf any one
 † do agaynst this Ordinaunce, at the firste tyme he to
 † lose his MINSTRELSIE, and at the second tyme to
 † forswear his craft, and never to be receaved for a
 † MINSTREL in any house. . . . Yeven at Langley the
 † vi. day of August, in the ix. yere of our reigne.’

These abuses arose again to as great a height as ever
 in little more than a century after; in consequence, I
 suppose, of the licentiousness that crept in during the
 civil wars of Lancaster and York. This appears from
 an Extract inserted by Du Cange, in his Glossary, *Ex*
Litteris Edwardi IV. Ann. 1439. [apud Rymer†, Tom. II.
 p. 642.] “MINISTRALLORUM nostrorum accepimus qua-
 liter nonnulli rudes agricolæ & artifices diversarum miste-
 rarum regni nostri Angliæ, finxerunt se fore MINISTRAL-
 LOS, quorum aliqui liberatam nostram eis minime datam por-
 tarent, seipsos etiam fingentes esse MINISTRALLOS NO-
 STROS PROPRIOS, cujus quidem liberatæ ac dictæ artis
 sive occupationis MINISTRALLORUM colore, in diversis
 partibus regni nostri prædicti grandes pecuniarum exactiones
 de ligeis nostris deceptivè colligunt, &c.”

This kind of abuses prevailed much later in Wales,
 as appears from the famous commission issued out in
 9. Eliz. 1569. for bestowing the SILVER HARP on the
 best Minstrel, Rhytmer, or Bard in that Principality,
 &c. See the Commission at large in Mr. EVAN EVANS’S
 “Specimens of Welsh Poetry,” &c. pag. v.

d 3

(Z) “It

† Not having Rymer at hand, I can only give it from Du Cange,
 Col. 772.

(Z) "It is thus related by Stow." See his *Survey of London*, &c. fol. 1633. p. 521. [Acc. of Westm. Hall.] Stow had this passage from Walsingham's *Hist. Ang.* . . . "Intravit quædam mulier ornata HISTRIONALI habitu, equum bonum insidens HISTRIONALITER phaleratum, quæ mensas more HISTRIONUM circuevit; Et tandem ad Regis mensam per gradus ascendit †, Et quandam literam coram rege posuit, Et retracto fræno (salutatis ubique discumbentibus) prout venerat ita recessit, &c." Anglica, Norm. Script. &c. Franc. 1603. fol. p. 109.

The Answer of the Porters (when they were afterwards blamed for admitting her) deserves attention. "Non esse moris domus regie HISTRIONES ab ingressu quomodolibet prohibere, &c. Walsingh.

The propriety of Stow's translating the original word *Histrion* here by *Minstrel*, &c. will hardly be questioned by those who consider, that he lived before this Order of Men was extinct, and consequently was a much better judge than we can be now, how to express their profession properly: Should his authority need any confirmation, it may be observed, that in John of Gaunt's Charter, the French word *Ministralx* is expressed in Latin by *Histriones*. See below Note (B b)

(A a) "There should seem to have been women of this profession," &c.] This one might infer from the variety of expressive names for this character in the middle ages, viz. Anglo-Sax. *Glyp-meden* [Glee-maiden], &c. *gлыпёnde-maden*, *gлыпёdenertra*. (vid. supra, p. liij.) Fr. *Jengleresse*. Med. Lat. *Jaculatrix*, *Ministratissa*, *Fæmina Ministerialis*, &c. (vid. Du Cange Gloss. & Suppl.)

The same also appears from the record concerning "Certain Women" quoted above in p. 24.

I would

† The MINSTRELS and others often rode on horseback up to the royal table, when the Kings were feasting in their Great Halls. See vol. I. of *Ancient Songs*, &c. p. 70. &c.

I would here observe, once for all, that when the words *Histrion*, *Mimus*, *Joculator*, *MINSTREL*; &c. occur in old writers, it is not very certain that they are always to be understood in the same precise and limited sense: for these names seem to have been sometimes applied to every species of men, whose business it was to entertain or divert (*joculari*) whether with Poetry, Singing, Music, or Gesticulation, singly; or with a Mixture of all these. Yet as all men of this sort were considered as belonging to one Class, Order or Community (all the above arts being often exercised by the same person) they had all of them doubtless the same privileges, and it equally throws light upon the general History of the Profession to shew what favour or encouragement was given, at any particular period of time, to any one branch of it. I have not therefore thought it needful to inquire, in all the foregoing instances, whether the word *Minstrel*, &c. is to be understood in its exact and proper meaning of a Singer to the Harp, &c.

That men of very different arts and talents were included under the common name of *MINSTRELS*, &c. appears from a variety of authorities. Thus we have *Menestrels de Trompes* and *Menestrels de Bouche* in the Suppl. to Du Cange, c. 1227. and it appears still more evident from an old French Rhymer, whom I shall quote at large.

“ Le Quens * manda les MENESTRELS,

“ Et si a fet † crier entre els,

“ Qui la meillor truffe || fauroit

“ Dire, ne faire, qu’il auroit

“ Sa robe d’ escarlate nueve.

“ L’uns Menestrels à l’autre reuve

“ Fere son mestier, tel qu’il sot,

d 4

“ Li

* Le Comte. † Fait. || Sornette; a Gibe or Jest, or flouting.

"Li uns fet l' yvre, l' autre fot ;

"Li uns chante, li autre note ;

"Et li autres dit la riote ;

"Et li autres la jenglerie † ;

"Cil qui sevent de jonglerie

"Vielent par devant le Conte ;

"Aucuns ja qui fabliaus conte

"Il i ot dit mainte risée." &c.

Fabliaux et Contes, izmo. Tom. 2. p. 161.

All this kind of Sports went by the general name of *Ministralcia*, *Ministellorum Ludrica*, &c.—"Charta an. 1377. apud Rymer. to. 7. p. 160. *Peraeto autem prandio, ascendebat D. Rex in cameram suam cum Prælati, Magnatibus & Proceribus prædictis : & deinceps Magnates, Milites & Domini, alique Generosi diem illum, usque ad tempus cænæ, in TRIPUDIIS, COREIS & SOLEMNIBUS MINISTRALCIIS, præ gaudio solempnitatis illius, continuarunt.*" Du Cange. Gloss. 772.

(B b) "A charter . . . to appoint a king of the "Minstrels, &c." Intituled *Carte le Roy de Ministraulx*. (In Latin *Histriones*. Vid. Plott. p. 437.) A copy of this charter may also be seen in Blount's Law Diction. 1717. (art. KING.)

The MINSTRELS seem to have been in many respects upon the same footing with the Heralds. The KING of the Minstrels, like the KING at Arms, was an usual officer both here and in France, as appears from Du Cange, whose curious collections on this subject I shall subjoin entire.

"REX MINISTELLORUM ; supremus inter *Ministellos* : de cujus munere, ac potestate in cæteros *Ministellos*, agit Charta Henrici IV. Regis Angliæ Gallica in Monast. Anglicano, tom. I. pag. 355. Charta "originalis

† Janglerie, babillage, raillerie. † This I suppose was the Coronation of Rich. II.

“Originalis an. 1338. *Je Robert Caveron Roy des Menestrels du Royaume de France.* Aliæ ann. 1357. & 1362. *Copin de Brequin Roy des Menestres du Royaume de France.* Computum de auxiliis pro redemptione Regis Johannis, ann. 1367. *Pour une COURONNE D'ARGENT qu'il donna le jour de la Trépassé au Roy des Menestrels.* Charta an. 1387. apud Rymer, tom. 7. p. 555. *Supplicavit nobis Johannes Caum Rex Ministrallorum nostrorum, qui versus diversas partes transmarinas transire proponit.* Du Cange Gloss. IV. 773.

“Regestum Magnorum Dierum Trecentium an. 1296. *Super quod Joannes dictus Charmillons Juglator, cui dominus Rex per suas literas tanquam REGEM JUGLATORUM in civitate Trecenti Magisterium Juglatorum, quemadmodum suæ placeret voluntati, concesserat.* Du Cange, c. 1587.

(C c) “Minstrels were retained in all great and noble families, &c.”] In the ancient MS. (described at the end of this vol. p. 367. containing an Account of the Establishment of the Household of the Earl of Northumberland, in the 3d year of Hen. VIII. at his Castle of Lekinfield in Yorkshire) occur several very curious articles on this subject, which I shall here subjoin.

Sect. V.

“Of the Nouble of all my lords Servaunts.”

“Item, MYNSTRALS in Household iij. viz. A Taberet, a Luyte, and a Rebeck*.”

Sect. XLIV. 3.

“Rewardes to his lordships Servaunts, &c.”

“Item, My lord usith ande accustomith to gyf yerly, when his lordschipp is at home, to his MINSTRAILLS
“that

* This was a kind of Fiddle with three strings only.

NOTES ON THE

“ that be daily in his household, as his Tabret, Lute;
 “ ande Rebeke, upon New Yeresday in the mornynge
 “ when they do play at my lordis Chamber Dour
 “ for his Lordschip and my Lady, xx. s. Viz. xiiij. s.
 “ iiij. d. for my Lord; and vj. s. viij. d. for my
 “ Lady, if sche be at my lords fyndynge, and not at
 “ hir owen; And for playing at my lordis Sone and
 “ Heire’s chamber Doure, the lord Percy, ij. s. And
 “ for playinge at the chamber Doures of my lords
 “ Yonger Sonnes, my yonge masters, after viij. d. the
 “ pece for every of them.—xxiiij. s. iiij. d.”

Se&t. XLIV. 2.

“ Rewardes to be geven to strangers, as Players,
 “ Mynstralls, or any other, &c.”

“ Furst, my lorde usith and accustomyth to gif to the
 “ KINGS JUGLER; when they custome to come
 “ unto hym yerely,—vj. s. viij. d.

“ Item, my lorde usith and accustomyth to gyf yerely
 “ to the kings or queenes Bearwarde, if they have
 “ one, when they custome to com unto hym yerly,—
 “ vj. s. viij. d.

“ Item, my lorde usith and accustomyth to gyfe
 “ yerly to every Erls MYNSTRELLIS, when they
 “ custome to come to hym yerely, iiij. s. iiij. d. And if
 “ they come to my lorde seldome, ones in ij or iij
 “ yeres, than vj. s. viij. d.

“ Item, my lorde usith and accustomedeth to gife
 “ yerely to an Erls MYNSTRALLS, if he be his spe-
 “ ciall lorde, frende, or kynsman, if they come yerely
 “ to his lordschip And, if they come to my
 “ ‘lord’ seldome, ones in ij or iij yeres”

* * * * *

“ Item, my lorde usith and accustomyth to gyf yerely
 “ a Dookes or Erlis TRUMPETTS, if they come vj to-
 “ gether to his lordschipp, viz. if they come yerly,
 “ vj. s. viij. d. And, if they come but in ij or iij
 “ yeres, than x. s.

“ Item,

"Item, my lorde usith and accustometh to gife yerly,
when his lordschip is at home, to gyf to the Kyngs
SHAWMES, when they com to my lorde yerely, x. s."

I cannot conclude this note without observing that in this Ancient MS, the family MINSTRELS seem to have been Musicians only, and yet both the earls' TRUMPETS and the king's SHAWMES, are evidently distinguished from the earls' MINSTRELS, and the king's JUGLAR; whether this last continued to be exactly the same with the *Joculator Regis* in the Doomesday book, I cannot determine.

(D d) "A species of men who did not sing, &c." It appears from the passage of Erasmus here referred to, that there still existed in England of that species of *Jongleurs* or MINSTRELS, whom the French called by the peculiar name of *Conteurs*, or Reciters in prose: It is in his *Ecclesiastes*, where he is speaking of such Preachers, as imitated the Tone of Beggars or Mountebanks:—" *Apud Anglos est simile genus hominum, quales apud Italos sunt circulatores [Mountebanks] de quibus modo dictum est; qui irrumpunt in convivia MAGNATUM, aut in CAUPONAS VINARIAS; et argumentum aliquod, quod edidicerunt, recitant; puta mortem omnibus dominari, aut laudem matrimonii. Sed quoniam ea lingua monosyllabis fere constat, quemadmodum Germanica; atque illi [sc. this peculiar species of Reciters] studio vitant cantum, nobis [sc. Erasmus, who did not understand a word of English] latrare videntur verius quam loqui.*" Opera, Tom. V. c. 958. (Jortin. Vol. 2. p. 193.) As Erasmus was correcting the vice of preachers, it was more to his point to bring an instance from Moral Reciters of Prose, than from Chanters of Rhyme, though it may be easily supposed, that these were far more numerous and common, and would be in general more popular.

(E e) "A

(Ee) "A writer there present."] See a very curious "LETTER, wherein part of the entertainment untoo "the Queenz Majesty at Killingworth Castl, in War- "wick-shear, in this Soomerz Progress, 1575, iz fig- "nified, &c." 12mo. bl. let. The orthography of this writer (whose name was Ro. LANGHAM, as appears from fol. 84.) is not followed in the Text, being not that of the age he lived in, but the peculiar result of his own ignorance or affectation.

(F f) "Little Miscellanies named GARLANDS, &c." In the Pepysian and other libraries, are preserved a great number of these in black letter, 12mo. under the following quaint and affected titles, viz.

1. A Crowne Garland of Goulden Roses gathered out of England's Royall Garden, &c. by Richard Johnson, 1612. [In the Bodleyan Library.]—2. The Golden Garland of Princely Delight.—3. The Garland of Good-will, by T. D. 1631.—4. The Royal Garland of Love and Delight, by T. D.—5. The Garland of Love and Mirth, by Thomas Lanfier.—6. The Garland of Delight, &c. by Tho. Delone.—7. Cupid's Garland set round with Gilded Roses.—8. The Garland of Withered Roses, by Martin Parker, 1656.—9. The Shepherd's Garland of Love, Loyalty, &c.—10. The Country Garland.—11. The Golden Garland of Mirth and Merriment.—12. The Lover's Garland.—13. Neptune's fair Garland.—14. England's fair Garland.—15. Robin Hood's Garland.—16. The Maiden's Garland.—17. A Loyal Garland of Mirth and Pastime.—18. A Royal Garland of new Songs.— &c. &c. &c.

This sort of petty publications had anciently the name of PENNY-MERRIMENTS: as little religious tracts of the same size were called PENNY GODLINESES: In the Pepysian Library are multitudes of both kinds.



ON THE ANCIENT
METRICAL ROMANCES

AND ON THE ORIGIN OF

ESSAY

I. THE first attempt at composition among all bar-

barous nations are ever found to be Poetry and
Song. The poems of the ancients are the achieve-
ments of their heroes, are usually chanted at their fe-
rival meetings. These are the first rudiments of His-

tory, and the first rudiments of the memory of past events; and
America presents the memory of past events; and
the same method is known to have prevailed among

METRICAL ROMANCES,

and the Gothic nations their songs or popular poetry,

whose purpose it was to record the victories of their
warrior heroes, which was continued to me-
kind of narrative songs, which were continued to me-
more, and have come down from one generation to another.

ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY.

So far as the history of the world is concerned, the first
step in the history of the world, there even are thought to
have performed the functions of the historian, poetry
faithfully; for the first nations would be apt to re-
ceive a good deal of embellishment, they are supposed

(1) The first attempt at composition among all bar-

(2) The first attempt at composition among all bar-

(3) The first attempt at composition among all bar-

ON THE ANCIENT METRICAL ROMANCES, AND ON THE ORIGIN OF ROMANCES OF CHIVALRY.

I. **T**HE first attempts at composition among all barbarous nations are ever found to be Poetry and Song. The praises of their Gods, and the achievements of their heroes, are usually chanted at their festival meetings. These are the first rudiments of History. It is in this manner that the savages of North America preserve the memory of past events (*a*): and the same method is known to have prevailed among our Saxon Ancestors, before they quitted their German forests (*b*). The ancient Britons had their **BARDS**, and the Gothic nations their **SCALDS** or popular poets (*c*), whose business it was to record the victories of their warriors, and the genealogies of their Princes, in a kind of narrative songs, which were committed to memory, and delivered down from one Reciter to another. So long as Poetry continued a distinct profession, and while the Bard, or Scald was a regular and stated officer in the Prince's court, these men are thought to have performed the functions of the historian pretty faithfully; for tho' their narrations would be apt to receive a good deal of embellishment, they are supposed to

(*a*) Vid. Lafiteau Moeurs de Sauvages, T. 2. Dr. Browne's Hist. of the Rise and Progress of Poetry.

(*b*) *Germani celebrant carminibus antiquis (quod unum apud illos memoriae et annalium genus est) Tuistonem &c.* Tacit. Germ. c. 2.

(*c*) Barth. Antiq. Dan. Lib. I. Cap. 10.—Wormii Literatura Runica, ad finem.

to have had at the bottom so much of truth as to serve for the basis of more regular annals. At least succeeding historians have taken up with the relations of these rude men, and for want of more authentic records, have agreed to allow them the credit of true history (*d*).

After letters began to prevail, and history assumed a more stable form, by being committed to plain simple prose; these Songs of the Scalds or Bards began to be more amusing, than useful. And in proportion as it became their business chiefly to entertain and delight, they gave more and more into embellishment, and set off their recitals with such marvelous fictions, as were calculated to captivate gross and ignorant minds. Thus began stories of adventures with Giants and Dragons, and Witches and Enchanters, and all the monstrous extravagances of wild imagination, unguided by judgment, and uncorrected by art (*e*.)

THIS is the true origin of that species of Romance, which so long celebrated feats of Chivalry, and which at first in metre and afterwards in prose, was the entertainment of our ancestors, in common with their contemporaries on the continent, till the satire of Cervantes, or rather the increase of knowledge and classical literature, drove them off the stage, to make room for a more refined species of fiction, under the name of French Romances, copied from the Greek (*f*).

That our old Romances of Chivalry may be derived in a lineal descent from the ancient historical songs of the Gothic bards and Scalds, will be shown below, and indeed appears the more evident as many of those Songs are still preserved in the north, which exhibit all

b 2

the

(*d*) See "A Description of the Manners, Customs, &c. of the ancient Danes and other northern nations, translated from the Fr. of M. Mallet." 8vo. vol. i. p. 49. &c.

(*e*) Vid. *infra*, p. iv, v, &c..

(*f*) Viz. ASTRÆA, CASSANDRA, CLELIA, &c;

the seeds of Chivalry before it became a solemn institution (*g*). "CHIVALRY, as a distinct military order, conferred in the way of investiture, and accompanied with "the solemnity of an oath, and other ceremonies," was of later date, and sprung out of the feudal constitution, as an elegant writer has lately shown (*h*). But the ideas of Chivalry prevailed long before in all the Gothic nations, and may be discovered as in embryo in the customs, manners, and opinions, of every branch of that people (*i*). That fondness of going in quest of adventures, that spirit of challenging to single combat, and that respectful complaisance shewn to the fair sex, (so different from the manners of the Greeks and Romans), all are of Gothic origin, and may be traced up to the earliest times among all the northern nations (*k*.) These existed long before the feudal ages, tho' they were called forth and strengthened in a peculiar manner under that constitution, and at length arrived to their full maturity in the times of the Crusades, so replete with romantic adventures (*l*).

EVEN the common arbitrary fictions of Romance were (as is hinted above) most of them familiar to the ancient

(*g*) Mallet. *vid.* *Descript of the Manners, &c. of the Danes.* vol. 1. p. 318, &c. vol. 2. p. 234. &c.

(*h*) Letters concerning Chivalry. 8vo. 1763.

(*i*) Mallet. *passim*.

(*k*) Mallet. *passim*.

(*l*) They could not owe their rise either to the feudal system or to the Crusades, because they existed long before either. Neither were the Romances of Chivalry transmitted to other nations from the Spaniards; who have been supposed to borrow them from the Moors, and these to have brought them from the east. Had this been the case, the first French Romances in verse would have been upon the same subjects of those of the Spaniards: whereas the most ancient metrical Romances in Spanish have nothing in common with those of the French, English, &c. being altogether on Moorish subjects; and the Spanish Romances on the subjects of Charlemagne, Arthur, &c. are chiefly in prose and of later date, being evidently borrowed from the French.

ancient Scalds of the north, long before the time of the Crusades. They believed the existence of Giants and Dwarfs (*m*), they had some notion of Fairies (*n*), they were strongly possessed with the belief of spells and enchantment (*o*), and were fond of inventing combats with Dragons and Monsters (*p*).

We have a striking instance of their turn for Chivalry and Romance, in the history of King Regner Lodbrog, a celebrated warrior and pirate, who reigned in Denmark about the year 800 (*q*). This hero signaled his youth by an exploit of gallantry. A Swedish prince had a beautiful daughter, whom he intrusted (probably during some expedition) to the care of one of his officers, assigning a strong castle for their defence. The Officer fell in love with his ward, and detained her in his castle, spite of all the efforts of her father. Upon this he published a proclamation through all the neighbouring countries, that whoever would conquer the ravisher and rescue the Lady should have her in marriage. Of all that undertook the adventure, Regner alone was so happy as to achieve it: he delivered the fair captive, and obtained her for his prize. It happened that the name of this discourteous officer was ORME, which in the Islandic language signifies SERPENT: Wherefore the Scalds, to give the more poetical turn to the adventure, represent the Lady as detained from her father by a dreadful Dragon, and that Regner

b 3

flew

French. Not but the Spaniards, like the other nations of Gothic race, had *ab origine* a turn for chivalry, which prepared them to receive and improve the Songs of the Moors, as well as those of the French, &c.

(*m*) Mallet. Descript. of the Danes. vol. 1. p. 36. vol. 2. passim.

(*n*) Olaus Verel. ad Hervarer Saga, p. 44. 45. Hickes's Thesaur. v. 2. p. 311. Descript. of the Ancient Danes, vol. 2. passim.

(*o*) Ibid. vol. 1. p. 69, 374, &c. vol. 2. p. 216, &c.

(*p*) Rollofs Saga. Cap. 35. &c.

(*q*) Saxo Gram. p. 152. 153.—Mallet. Descript. vol. 1. p. 321.

flew the monster to set her at liberty. Even Regner himself, who was a celebrated poet, gives this fabulous account of the exploit in a poem of his own writing that is still extant, and which records all the valiant achievements of his life (*r*).

WITH marvelous embellishments of this kind the Scalds early began to decorate their narratives: and they were the more lavish of these, in proportion as they departed from their original institution, but it was a long time before they thought of delivering a set of personages and adventures wholly feigned. Of the great multitude of romantic tales still preserved in the libraries of the North, most of them are supposed to have had some foundation in truth, and the more ancient they are the more they are believed to be connected with true history (*s*).

It was not probably till after the historian and the bard had been long disunited, that the latter ventured at pure fiction. At length when their business was no longer to instruct or inform, but merely to amuse, it was no longer needful for them to adhere to truth. Then began fabulous and romantic songs which for a long time prevailed in France and England before they had books of Chivalry in prose. Yet in both these countries the Minstrels still retained so much of their original institution, as frequently to make true events the subject of their Songs (*t*); and indeed, as during the barbarous ages, the regular histories were almost all written in Latin by the Monks, the memory of events was preserved and propagated among the ignorant

(*r*) See a Translation of this poem, among the "Five pieces of Runic Poetry," &c.

(*s*) Vid. Mallet. Descript. of the Manners, &c. of the Danes, passim.

(*t*) The Editor's MS. contains a multitude of poems of this latter kind. It was from this custom of the Minstrels that some of our first Historians wrote their Chronicles in verse, as Rob. of Gloucester, Harding, &c.

norant laity by scarce any other means than the popular Songs of the Minstrels.

II. THE inhabitants of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway, being the latest converts to Christianity, retained their original manners and opinions longer than the other nations of Gothic race: and therefore they have preserved more of the genuine compositions of their ancient poets, than their southern neighbours. Among these the progress from poetical history to poetical fiction is very discernible: they have some of the latter kind, that are in effect complete Romances of Chivalry(*u*). They have also a multitude of SAGAS(*x*) or histories on romantic subjects, containing a mixture of prose and verse, of various dates, some of them written since the times of the Crusades, others long before: but their narratives in verse only are esteemed the more ancient.

Now as the irruption of the NORMANS(*y*) into France under Rollo did not take place till towards the beginning of the tenth century, at which time the Scaldic art was arrived to the highest pitch in Rollo's native country, we can easily trace the descent of the French and English Romances of Chivalry from the Northern Sagas. That conqueror doubtless carried many SCALDS with him from the north, who transmitted their skill to their children and successors. These adopting the religion, opinions, and language of the new country, substituted the heroes of Christendom instead of those of their Pagan ancestors, and began to celebrate the feats of Charlemagne, Roland, and Oliver; whose

b 4

true

(*u*) See a Specimen in 2d Vol. of Descript. of the Manners of the Danes, &c. p. 248, &c.

(*x*) Eccardi Hist. Stud. Etym. 1711. p. 179, &c. Hickes's Thesaur. Vol. 2. p. 314.

(*y*) *i. e.* NORTHERN MEN: being chiefly Emigrants from Norway, Denmark, &c.

true history they set off and embellished with the Scaldic figments of dwarfs, giants, dragons, and enchantments. The first mention we have in song of those heroes of chivalry is in the mouth of a Norman warrior at the conquest of England (*z*): and this circumstance alone would sufficiently account for the propagation of this kind of romantic poems among the French and English.

But this is not all; it is very certain, that both the Anglo-saxons and the Franks had brought with them, at their first emigrations into Britain and Gaul, the same fondness for the ancient songs of their ancestors, which prevailed among the other Gothic tribes (*a*), and that all their first annals were transmitted in these popular oral poems. This fondness they even retained long after their conversion to Christianity, as we learn from the examples of Charlemagne and Alfred (*b*). Now POETRY, being thus the transmitter of facts, would as easily learn to blend them with fictions in France and England, as she is known to have done in the north, and that much sooner, for the reasons before assigned (*c*). This, together with the example and influence of the Normans, will easily account to us, why the first Romances of Chivalry that appeared both in England and France

(*z*) See the Account of TAILLEFER in Essay I.

(*a*) *Ipsa CARMINA memoria mandabant, & praelia initari decantabant; qua memoria tam fortium gestorum a majoribus patrum ad imitationem animus adderetur.* Jornandes de Gothis.

(*b*) Eginhartus de CAROLO MAGNO. "*Item barbara & antiquissima CARMINA, quibus veterum regum actus & bella canebantur, scripsit.*" c. 29.

Afferius de ÆLFREDO MAGNO. "*Rex inter bella, &c. Saxonicos libros recitare, & MAXIME CARMINA SAXONICA memoriter discere, aliis imperare, & solus assidue pro viribus, studiosissime non desinebat.*" Ed. 1722. 8vo. p. 43.

(*c*) See above, p. iii, vi, &c.

France (*d*) were composed in metre, as a rude kind of epic songs. In both kingdoms tales in verse were usually sung by Minstrels to the harp on festival occasions: and doubtless both nations derived their relish for this sort of entertainment from their Teutonic ancestors, without either of them borrowing it from the other. Among both people narrative Songs on true or fictitious subjects had evidently obtained from the earliest times. But the professed Romances of Chivalry seem to have been first composed in France, where also they had their name.

The Latin Tongue, as is observed by an ingenious writer (*e*), ceased to be spoken in France about the ninth century, and was succeeded by what was called the ROMANCE Tongue, a mixture of the language of the Franks and bad Latin. As the Songs of Chivalry became the most popular compositions in that language, they were emphatically called ROMANS or ROMANTS; tho' this name was at first given to any piece of poetry. The Romances of Chivalry can be traced as early as the eleventh century (*f*). The famous *Roman de Brut* by Maître *Eustache* was written in 1155: But this was by no means the first poem of the kind; others more ancient are still extant (*g*). And we have already
seen,

(*d*) The Romances on the subject of PERCEVAL, SAN GRAAL, LANCELOT DU LAC, TRISTAN, &c. were among the first that appeared in the French language in PROSE, yet these were originally composed in METRE: The Editor has in his possession a very old French MS. in verse, containing *L'ancien Roman de PERCEVAL*, and metrical copies of the others may be found in the libraries of the curious. See a Note of Wanley's in Harl. Catalog. Num. 2252, p. 49, &c. Nicholson's Eng. Hist. Library, 3d Ed. p. 91. &c.— See also a curious collection of old French Romances, with Mr. Wanley's account of this sort of pieces, in Harl. MSS. Catal. 978. 106.

(*e*) The Author of the Essay on the Genius of Pope, p. 282.

(*f*) Ibid. p. 283. Hist. Lit. Tom. 6. 7.

(*g*) Voir Preface aux "Fabliaux & Contes des Poetes François des XII, XIII, XIV, & XV siecles, &c. Paris, 1756. 3 Tom, "12mo." (A very curious work.)

seen, that, in the preceding century, when the Normans marched down to the battle of Hastings, they animated themselves, by singing (in some popular romance or ballad) the exploits of ROLAND and the other heroes of Chivalry (*b*).

So early as this I cannot trace the Songs of Chivalry in English. The most ancient I have seen, is that of HORNECHILD described below, which seems not older than the twelfth century. However, as this rather resembles the Saxon poetry, than the French, it is not certain that the first English Romances were translated from that language. We have seen above, that a propensity to this kind of fiction prevailed among all the Gothic nations (*i*) ; and, tho' after the Norman Conquest, both the French and English translated each others Romances, there is no room to doubt, but both of them composed original pieces of their own.

The

(*b*) Vid. *supra*, Vol. I. Introd. p. xxvii, &c. Et vide Rapin, Carte, &c.—This Song of ROLAND (whatever it was) continued for some centuries to be usually sung by the French in their marches, if we may believe a modern French writer. “*Un jour qu'on chantoit la CHANSON DE ROLAND, comme c'étoit l'usage dans les marches. Il y a long temps, dit IL, [John K. of France, who died in 1364.] qu'on ne voit plus de Rolands parmi les François. On y verroit encore des Rolands, lui rependit un vieux Capitaine, s'ils avoient un Charlemagne a leur tête.*” Vid. Tom. iii. p. 202. des *Essais Hist. sur Paris* de M. DE SAINTEFOIX: who gives as his authority, *Boethius in Hist. Scotorum*. This Author, however, speaks of the Complaint and Repartee, as made in an Assembly of the States, (*vocato senatu*), and not upon any march, &c. Vid. *Boeth. lib. xv. fol. 327. Ed. Paris, 1574.*

(*i*) The first Romances of Chivalry among the GERMANS were in Metre: they have some very ancient narrative Songs, (which they call *Lieder*) not only on the fabulous heroes of their own country, but also on those of France and Britain, as Tristram, Arthur, Gawain, and the Knights *Von der Tafel-ronde*. (Vid. Goldasti *Not. in Eginhart. Vit. Car. Mag. 4to. 1711. p. 207.*)

The same stories prevailed also in ITALY and Spain: this kind of fictions was at one time or other admired and cultivated throughout Europe.

The stories of King Arthur and his Round Table, may be reasonably supposed of the growth of this island; both the English and the French had them from the Britons (*k*). The stories of Guy and Bevis, with some others, were probably the invention of English Minstrels (*l*). On the other hand, the English procured translations of such Romances as were most current in France; and in the List given at the conclusion of these Remarks, many are doubtless of French original.

The first PROSE books of Chivalry that appeared in our language, were those printed by Caxton (*m*); at least, these are the first I have been able to discover, and these are all translations from the French. Whereas Romances of this kind had been long current in metre, and were so generally admired in the time of Chaucer, that his Rhyme of Sir Thopas was evidently written to ridicule and burlesque them (*n*).

He

(*k*) The Welsh have still some very old Romances about K. Arthur; but as these are in prose, they are not probably their first pieces that were composed on that subject.

(*l*) That the French Romancers borrowed some things from the English, appears from the word *TERMAGANT*, which they took up from our Minstrels, and corrupted into *TERVAGAUNTE*. See Vol. I. p. 74. 362.

(*m*) Recuyel of the Hystories of Troy, 1471. Godfroye of Boioyne, 1481. Le Morte de Arthur, 1485. The life of Charlemagne, 1485. &c. As the old Minstrelsy wore out, prose books of Chivalry became more admired, especially after the Spanish Romances began to be translated into English towards the end of Q. Elizabeth's reign: then the most popular metrical Romances began to be reduced into prose, as Sir Guy, Bevis, &c.

(*n*) See Extract from a Letter in Mr. Warton's Observations, Vol. 2. p. 139. [Where in p. 140. instead of "*Most of these, &c.*" read, "*Many of the old poetical Romances are in the very same metre, &c.*"—The old black-letter Edit. in p. 142. proves to be one of Speght's.]

He expressly mentions several of them by name in a stanza, which I shall have occasion to quote more than once in this volume.

Men spoken of Romaunces of Price,
Of Horne-Child, and Ipotis,
Of Bevis, and Sir Guy,
Of Sir Libeaux and Blandamoure,
But Sir Thopas bereth the floure,
Of riall chevallrie.

Most, if not all of these are still extant in MS. in some or other of our libraries, as I shall shew in the conclusion of this slight Essay, where I shall give a list of such metrical Histories and Romances as have fallen under my observation.

As many of them contain a considerable portion of poetic merit, and throw great light on the manners and opinions of former times, it were to be wished that some of the best of them were rescued from oblivion. A judicious collection of them accurately published with proper illustrations, would be an important accession to our stock of ancient English Literature. Many of them exhibit no mean attempts at Epic Poetry, and tho' full of the exploded fictions of Chivalry, frequently display great descriptive and inventive powers in the Bards, who composed them. They are at least generally equal to any other poetry of the same age. They cannot indeed be put in competition with the nervous productions of so universal and commanding a genius as Chaucer, but they have a simplicity that makes them be read with less interruption, and be more easily understood: and they are far more spirited and entertaining than the tedious allegories of Gower, or the dull and prolix legends of Lydgate. Yet, while so much stress is laid upon the writings of these last, by such as treat of English poetry, the old metrical Romances, tho' far more popular in their time, are hardly known to exist. But

it

it has happened unluckily, that the antiquaries, who have revived the works of our ancient writers, have been for the most part men void of taste and genius, and therefore have always fastidiously rejected the old poetical Romances, because founded on fictitious or popular subjects, while they have been careful to grub up every petty fragment of the most dull and insipid rhymist, whose merit it was to deform morality, or obscure true history. Should the public encourage the revival of some of those ancient Epic Songs of Chivalry, they would frequently see the rich ore of an Ariosto or a Tasso, tho' buried it may be among the rubbish and dross of barbarous times.

Such a publication would answer many important uses: It would throw new light on the rise and progress of English poetry, the history of which can be but imperfectly understood, if these are neglected: It would also serve to illustrate innumerable passages in our ancient classic poets, which without their help must be forever obscure. For not to mention Chaucer and Spenser, who abound with perpetual allusions to them, I shall give an instance or two from Shakespeare, by way of specimen of their use.

In his play of KING JOHN our great Dramatic Poet alludes to an exploit of Richard I. which the reader will in vain look for in any true history. Faulconbridge says to his mother, Act I. sc. 1.

- "Needs must you lay your heart at his dispose . . .
- "Against whose furie and unmatched force,
- "The awlesse lion could not wage the fight,
- "Nor keepe his princely heart from Richard's hand:
- "He that perforce robs Lions of their hearts
- "May easily winne a woman's: "—

The fact here referred to, is to be traced to its source only in the old Romance of RICHARD CEUR DE LYON,

LYON (o), in which his encounter with a lion makes a very shining figure. I shall give a large extract from this poem, as a specimen of the manner of these old rhapsodists, and to shew that they did not in their fictions neglect the proper means to produce the ends, as was afterwards done in so childish a manner in the prose books of Chivalry.

The poet tells us, that Richard in his return from the Holy Land having been discovered in the habit of "a palmer in Almayne," and apprehended as a spy, was by the king thrown into prison. Wardrewe, the king's son, hearing of Richard's great strength, desires the jailor to let him have a fight of his prisoners. Richard being the foremost, Wardrewe asks him, "if he dare stand a buffet from his hand?" and that on the morrow he shall return him another. Richard consents, and receives a blow that staggers him. On the morrow, having previously waxed his hands, he waits his antagonist's arrival. Wardrewe accordingly, proceeds the story, "held forth as a trewe man," and Richard gave him such a blow on the cheek, as broke his jaw-bone, and killed him on the spot. The king, to revenge the death of his son, orders, by the advice of one Eldrede, that a Lion kept purposely from food, shall be turned loose upon Richard. But the king's daughter having fallen in love with him, tells him of her father's resolution, and at his request procures him forty ells of white silk "kerchers;" and here the description of the Combat begins,

The kever-chefes (p) he toke on honde;
And aboute his arme he wonde;

And

(o) Dr. Grey has shewn that the same story is alluded to in Raftell's Chronicle: As it was doubtless originally had from the Romance, this is proof that the old metrical Romances throw light on our first writers in prose: many of our ancient Historians have recorded the fictions of Romance.

(p) i. e. Handkerchiefs. Here we have the etymology of the word, viz. "Couvre le chef."

And thought in that ylke while,
 To flee the lyon with some gyle.
 And syngle in a kyrtyll he stode,
 And abode the lyon fyers and wode.
 With that came the jaylere,
 And other men that wyth him were,
 And the lyon them amonge;
 His pawes were stiffe and stronge.
 The chambre dore they undone,
 And the lyon to them is gone.
 Rycharde sayd, Helpe, lorde Jesu!
 The lyon made to hym venu,
 And wolde hym have all to rente:
 Kyng Rycharde besyde hym glente (*q*):
 The lyon on the breste hym spurned,
 That aboute he tourned.
 The lyon was hongry and megre,
 And bette his tayle to be egre;
 He loked aboute as he were madde;
 Abrode he all his pawes spradde.
 He cryed lowde, and yaned (*q*) wyde.
 Kyng Rycharde bethought hym that tyde,
 What hym was beste, and to hym sterte,
 In at the throte his honde he gerte,
 And hente out the herte with his honde,
 Lounge and all that he there fonde.
 The lyon fell deed to the ground:
 Rycharde felte no wem (*r*), ne wounde.
 He fell on his knees on that place,
 And thanked Jesu of his grace.

* * * *

What

(*p*) i. e. glanced, slipt.

(*q*) i. e. yawned.

(*r*) i. e. hurt.

What follows is not so well, and therefore I shall extract no more of this poem: but the preceding circumstances are not unworthy the selection of any Epic poet. —For the above feat the author tells us, the king was deservedly called

Stronge Rycharde Cure de Lyowne.

THAT distich which Shakespeare puts in the mouth of his madman in K. LEAR, Act 3. sc. 4.

Mice and Rats and such small deere
Have been Tom's food for seven long yeare,

has excited the attention of the critics. Instead of *deere*, one of them would substitute *geer*; and another *cheer* (*s*). But the ancient reading is established by the old Romance of SIR BEVIS, which Shakespeare had doubtless often heard sung to the harp. This distich is part of a description there given of the hardships suffered by Bevis, when confined for seven years in a dungeon.

Rattes and myse and such smal dere
Was his meate that seven yere.

Sign. F. iii.

III. IN different parts of this work, the Reader will find various extracts from these old poetical Legends: to which I refer him for farther examples of their style and metre. To complete this subject, it will be proper at least to give one specimen of their skill in distributing and conducting their fable, by which it will be seen that nature and common sense had supplied to these old simple bards the want of critical art, and taught them some of the most essential rules of Epic Poetry. — I shall

(*s*) Bp. Warb.—Dr. Grey.

shall select the Romance of LIBIUS DISCONIUS (*t*), as being one of those mentioned by Chaucer, and either shorter or more intelligible than the others he has quoted.

If an Epic Poem may be defined, “ (*u*) A fable related by a poet, to excite admiration and inspire virtue, by representing the action of some one hero, favoured by heaven, who executes a great design, in spite of all the obstacles that oppose him : ” I know not why we should withhold the name of EPIC POEM from the piece which I am about to analyse.

My copy is divided into IX PARTS or Cantos, the several arguments of which are as follows.

PART I.

Opens with a short exordium to bespeak attention : the Hero is described, a natural son of Sir Gawain, a celebrated knight of K. Arthur’s court, who being brought up in a forest by his mother, is kept ignorant of his name and descent. He early exhibits marks of his courage, by killing a knight in single combat, who encountered him as he was hunting. This inspires him with a desire of seeking adventures : therefore cloathing himself in his enemy’s armour, he goes to K. Arthur’s Court, to request the order of knighthood. His request granted, he obtains a promise of having the first adventure assigned him that shall offer.—A damsel named Ellen, attended by a dwarf, comes to implore K. Arthur’s assistance, to rescue a young Princess, “ the Lady of Sinadone ” their mistress, who is detained from her rights, and confined in prison. The adventure is claimed by the young knight Sir Lybius : the king assents : the messengers are dissatisfied, and object to his youth ; but are forced to acquiesce. And here the first book closes with a description of the ceremony of equipping him forth.

C

PART

(*t*) So it is intitled in the Editor’s MS.

(*u*) Vid. “ Discours sur la Poësie Epique,” prefixed to TELEMAQUE.

P A R T II.

Sir Lybius sets out on the adventure: he is derided by the dwarf and the damsel on account of his youth: they come to the bridge of Perill, which none can pass without encountering a knight called William de la Braunch. Sir Lybius is challenged: they just with their spears: De la Braunch is dismounted: the battle is renewed on foot: Sir William's sword breaks: he yields. Sir Lybius makes him swear to go and present himself to K. Arthur, as the first-fruits of his valour. The conquered knight sets out for K. Arthur's court: is met by three knights, his relations: who, informed of his disgrace, vow revenge, and pursue the conqueror. The next day they overtake him: the eldest of the three attacks Sir Lybius: but is overthrown to the ground. The two other brothers assault him: Sir Lybius is wounded; yet cuts off the second brother's arm: the third yields: Sir Lybius sends them all to K. Arthur. In the third evening he is awaked by the dwarf, who has discovered a fire in a wood.

P A R T III.

Sir Lybius arms himself, and leaps on horseback: he finds two Giants roasting a wild boar, who have a fair Lady their captive. Sir Lybius, by favour of the night, runs one of them through with his spear: is assaulted by the other: a fierce battle ensues: he cuts off the giant's arm, and at length his head. The rescued Lady (an Earl's daughter) tells him her story; and leads him to her father's castle: who entertains him with a great feast; and presents him at parting with a suit of armour and a steed. He sends the giant's head to K. Arthur.

P A R T IV.

Sir Lybius, maid Ellen, and the dwarf, renew their journey: they see a castle stuck round with human heads; and are informed it belongs to a knight called Sir Gefferon, who, in honour of his lemman or mistress, challenges all comers: He that can produce a fairer lady, is to be rewarded with a milk-white faulcon, but

if overcome, to lose his head. Sir Lybius spends the night in the adjoining town: In the morning goes to challenge the faulcon. The knights exchange their gloves: they agree to just in the market place: the lady and maid Ellen are placed aloft in chairs: their dresses: the superior beauty of Sir Gefferon's mistress described: the ceremonies previous to the combat. They engage: the combat described at large: Sir Gefferon is incurably hurt; and carried home on his shield. Sir Lybius sends the faulcon to K. Arthur; and receives back a large present in florins. He stays 40 days to be cured of his wounds, which he spends in feasting with the neighbouring lords.

P A R T V.

Sir Lybius proceeds for Sinadone: in a forest he meets a knight hunting, called Sir Otes de Lisle: maid Ellen charmed with a very beautiful dog, begs Sir Lybius to bestow him upon her: Sir Otes meets them, and claims his dog: is refused: being unarmed he rides to his castle, and summons his attendants: they go in quest of Sir Lybius: a battle ensues: he is still victorious, and forces Sir Otes to follow the other conquered knights to K. Arthur.

P A R T VI.

Sir Lybius comes to a fair city and castle by a river-side, beset round with pavilions or tents: he is informed, in the castle is a beautiful lady besieged by a giant named Maugys, who keeps the bridge, and will let none pass without doing him homage: this Lybius refuses: a battle ensues: the giant described: the several incidents of the battle; which lasts a whole summer's day: the giant is wounded; put to flight; slain. The citizens come out in procession to meet their deliverer: the lady invites him into her castle: falls in love with him: and seduces him to her embraces. He forgets the princess of Sinadone, and stays with this bewitching lady a twelvemonth. This fair sorceress, like another Alcina, intoxicates him with all kinds of

sensual pleasure; and detains him from the pursuit of honour.

PART VII.

Maid Ellen by chance gets an opportunity of speaking to him; and upbraids him with his vice and folly: he is filled with remorse, and escapes the same evening. At length he arrives at the city and castle of Sinadone: is given to understand that he must challenge the constable of the castle to single combat, before he can be received as a guest. They fight: the constable is worsted: Sir Lybius is feasted in the castle: he declares his intention of delivering their lady; and inquires the particulars of her history. "Two Necromancers have built a fine palace by sorcery, and there keep her enchanted, till she will surrender her duchy to them, and yield to such base conditions as they would impose."

PART VIII.

Early on the morrow Sir Lybius sets out for the enchanted palace. He alights in the court: enters the hall: the wonders of which are described in strong Gothic painting. He sits down at the high table: on a sudden all the lights are quenched: it thunders, and lightens; the palace shakes; the walls fall in pieces about his ears. He is dismayed and confounded: but presently hears horses neigh, and is challenged to single combat by the sorcerers. He gets to his steed: a battle ensues, with various turns of fortune: he loses his weapon: but gets a sword from one of the Necromancers, and wounds the other with it: the edge of the sword being secretly poisoned, the wound proves mortal.

PART IX.

He goes up to the surviving sorcerer, who is carried away from him by enchantment: at length he finds him, and cuts off his head: He returns to the palace to deliver the lady: but cannot find her: as he is lamenting, a window opens, through which enters a
horrible

horrible serpent with wings and a woman's face: it coils round his neck and kisses him; then is suddenly converted into a very beautiful lady. She tells him she is the Lady of Sinadone, and was so enchanted, till she might kiss Sir Gawain, or some one of his blood: that he has dissolved the charm, and that herself and her dominions may be his reward. He joyfully accepts the offer; makes her his bride, and then sets out with her for King Arthur's court."

SUCH is the fable of this ancient piece: which the reader may observe, is as regular in its conduct, as any of the finest poems of classical antiquity. If the execution, particularly as to the diction and sentiments, were but equal to the plan, it would be a capital performance; but this is such as might be expected in rude and ignorant times, and in a barbarous unpolished language.

IV. I SHALL conclude this prolix account, with a LIST of such old METRICAL ROMANCES as are still extant: beginning with those mentioned by Chaucer.

1. The Romance of *Horne-childe* is preserved in the British Museum, where it is intitled *þe geste of kyng Horne*. See Catalog. Harl. MSS. 2253. p. 70. The Language is almost Saxon, yet from the mention in it of Sarazens, it appears to have been written after some of the Crusades. It begins thus,

All heo ben blyþe
þat to my song ylyþe:
A song ychulle ou sing
Of Allof þe gode kynge (x) &c.

Another copy of this poem, but greatly altered and somewhat modernized, is preserved in the Advocates

c 3

Library

(x) i. e. May all they be blithe, that to my song listen: A song I shall you sing, Of Allof the good king, &c.

Library at Edinburgh, in a MS. quarto volume of old English poetry [W. 4. 1.] Num. XXXIV. in seven leaves or folios (*b*), intitled, *Horn-child and Maiden Rinivel*, and beginning thus,

Mi leve frende dere,
Herken and ye may here.

2. The Poem of *Ipotis* (or *Ypotis*) is preserved in the Cotton Library, Calig. A. 2. fo. 77. but is rather a religious Legend, than a Romance. Its beginning is,

He þat wyll of wyfdome here
Herkeneth nowe ze may here
Of a tale of holy wryte
Seynt Jon the Evangelyfte wytnesseth hyt.

3 The Romance of *Sir Guy*, was written before that of *Bevis*, being quoted in it (*y*). An account of this old poem is given in vol. 3. of *Ancient Songs, &c.* p. 100. To which it may be added, that two complete copies in MS. are preserved at Cambridge, the one in the public Library (*x*), the other in that of Caius College, Class A. 8.—In Ames's *Typog.* p. 153. may be seen the first lines of the printed copy.—The 1st MS. begins,

Sythe the tyme that God was borne.

4. *Guy and Colbronde*, an old Romance in three parts, is preserved in the Editor's folio MS. (p. 349.) It is in

(*b*) In each full page of this Vol. are 44 lines, when the poem is in long metre : and 88, when the metre is short, and the page in 2 columns.

(*y*) Sign. K. 2. b.

(*x*) For this and most of the following, which are mentioned as preserved in the Public Library, I refer the reader to the *Oxon Catalogue of MSS.* 1697. vol. 2. pag. 394. in Appendix to Bp. More's *MSS.* No. 690, 33. since given to the University of Cambridge.

in stanzas of 6 lines, the first of which may be seen in vol. 2. of *Ancient Songs*, &c. p. 163. beginning thus,

When meate and drinke is great plentye.

In the Edinburgh MS. (mentioned above) are two ancient poems on the subject of *Guy of Warwick*: viz. Num. XVIII. containing 26. leaves. and XX. 59 leaves. Both these have unfortunately the beginnings wanting, otherwise they would perhaps be found to be different Copies of one or both the preceding articles.

5. From the same MS. I can add another article to this list, viz. The Romance of *Rembrun* son of Sir Guy; being Num. XXI. in 9 leaves: this is properly a Continuation of the History of *Guy*: and in Art. 3. the Hist. of *Rembrun* follows that of *Guy* as a necessary Part of it. This Edinburgh Romance of *Rembrun* begins thus

Jesu that erst of mighte most
Fader and sone and Holy Gost.

Before I quit the subject of Sir *Guy*, I must observe, that if we may believe Dugdale in his *Baronage*, [vol. 1. p. 243. col. 2.] the fame of our English Champion had in the time of Henry IV. travelled as far as the East, and was no less popular among the Sarazens, than here in the West among the Nations of Christendom. In that reign a Lord Beauchamp travelling to Jerusalem, was kindly received by a noble person, the Soldan's Lieutenant, who hearing he was descended from the famous *Guy of Warwick*, "whose story" they had in books of their own language," invited him to his palace; and royally feasting him, presented him with three precious stones of great value; besides divers cloaths of silk and gold given to his servants.

6. The Romance of *Syr Bevis* is described in vol. 3. of *Ancient Songs, &c.* pag. 216. Two manuscript copies of this poem are extant at Cambridge; viz. in the Public Library (a), and in that of Caius Coll. Class A. 9. (5.)—The first of these begins,

Lordyngs lystenyth grete and smale.

There is also a Copy of this Romance of *Sir Bevis of Hamptoun*, in the Edinburgh MS. Numb. XXII. consisting of 25 leaves, and beginning thus,

Lordinges kerkneth to mi tale,
Is merier than the nightengale,

The printed copies begin different from both: viz.

Lysten, Lordinges, and hold you styl.

7. *Libeaux* (*Libeaus*, or, *Lybius*) *Disconius* is preserved in the Editor's folio MS. (pag. 317.) where the first stanza is,

Jesus Christ christen kinge,
And his mother that sweete thinge,
Helpe them at their neede,
That will listen to my tale,
Of a Knight I will you tell,
A doughtye man of deede.

An older copy is preserved in the Cotton Library [Cal. A. 2. fol. 40.] containing innumerable variations: the first line is,

Jesu Christ our Savyour.

As

(a) No. 690. §. 31. Vid. Catalog. MSS. p. 394.

As for *Blandamoure*, no Romance with this title has been discovered; but as the word occurs in that of *Li-beaux*, 'tis possible Chaucer's memory deceived him.

8. *Le Morte Artbure*, is among the Harl. MSS. 2252. § 49. This is judged to be a translation from the French; Mr. Wanly thinks it no older than the time of Hen. vii. but it seems to be quoted in *Syr Bevis*, (Sign. K. ij. b.) It begins

Lordinges, that are leffe and deare.

In the Library of Bennet Coll. Cambridge, N^o. 351. is a MS. intituled in the Cat. *Æta Artburis Metrico Anglicano*, but I know not whether it has any thing in common with the former.

9. In the Editor's Folio MS. are many Songs and Romances about King Arthur and his Knights, some of which are very imperfect, as *K. Arthur and the king of Cornwall*. (p. 24.) in stanzas of 4 Lines, beginning

Come here, my cozen Gawain so gay.

The Turke and Garwain, (p. 38.) in stanzas of 6 lines, beginning thus,

Listen, Lords, great and small.

Sir Lionel in distichs (p. 32.) thus beginning,

Sir Egrabell had Sonnes three.

but these are so imperfect that I do not make distinct articles of them. See also in vol. 3. of *Ancient Songs*, &c. Book 1. N^o. I. II. IV. V.

10. In the same MS. p. 203. is the *Greene Knight*, in 2 Parts, relating a curious adventure of Sir Gawain, in stanzas of 6 lines, beginning thus,

Liſt,

Lift : when Arthur he was kinge.

11. *The Carle of Carlisle*, is another romantic tale about Sir Gawain, in the same MS. p. 448. in distichs.

Listen to me a little stonde.

In all these old poems the same set of knights are always drawn with the same manners and characters ; which seem to have been as well known and as distinctly marked among our ancestors, as Homer's Heroes were among the Greeks : For as *Ulysses* is always represented crafty, *Achilles* irascible, and *Ajax* rough. So *Sir Gawain* is ever courteous and gentle, *Sir Kay* rugged and disobliging, &c. "*Sir Gawain with his* *ould courtesy*" is mentioned by Chaucer as noted to a proverb, in his Squire's Tale. Urry's Ed. p. 60. v. 115.

12. *Syr Launfal*, an excellent old Romance concerning another of K. Arthur's Knights, is preserved in the Cotton Library, Calig. A. 2. f. 33. This is a translation from the French (*b*) made by one *Thomas Chestre*, who is supposed to have lived in the reign of Hen. vi. [See Tanner's Biblioth.] It is in stanzas of 6 Lines, and begins,

Le douzty Artours dawes.

The above was afterwards altered by some Minstrel into the Romance of *Sir Lambwell*, in 3 Parts, under which title it was more generally known (*c*). This is in the Editor's folio MS. p. 60. beginning thus,

Doughty in king Arthures dayes.

13. The

(*b*) The French Original is preserved among the Harl. MSS. No. 978. § 112. *Lanval*.

(*c*) See Langham's Letter concern. Q. Eliz. entertainment at Kingtonworth, 1575. 12mo. p. 34.

13. The Romance of *Merline*, in 9 Parts, (preserved in the same folio MS. p. 144.) gives a curious account of the birth, parentage, and juvenile adventures of this famous British Prophet. In this poem the Saxons are called *Sarazens*; and the thrusting the rebel angels out of Heaven is attributed to "*oure Lady*." It is in distichs, and begins thus,

He that made with his hand.

There is an old Romance *Of Arthour and of Merlin*, in the Edinburgh MS. of old English Poems: I know not whether it has any thing in common with this last mentioned. It is in the volume, numbered XXIII. and extends through 55 leaves. The two first Lines are

Jesu Crist, heven king
Al ous graunt gode ending.

14. *Sir Isenbras*, (or as it is in the MS. copies, *Sir Isumbras*) is quoted in Chaucer's R. of Thop. v. 6. Among Mr. Garrick's old plays is a printed copy; of which an account has been given, in vol. 1. of Ancient Songs, &c. p. 305. It is preserved in MS. in the Library of Caius Coll. Camb. Class A. 9. (2.) and also in the Cotton Library, Cal. A. 12. (f. 128.) This is extremely different from the printed copy. E. g.

God þat made both erþe and hevene.

15. *Emarè*, a very curious and ancient Romance, is preserved in the same Vol. of the Cotton Library, f. 69. It is in stan. of 6 lines, and begins thus,

Jesu þat ys kyng in trone.

16. *Chevelere assigne*, or, The Knight of the Swan, preserved in the Cotton Library, has been described in vol. 2. of Ancient Songs, &c. p. 272. as hath also

17. The

17. *The Sege of Jérusalem*, (or Jerusalem) which seems to have been written after the other, and may not improperly be classed among the Romances : as may also the following which is preserved in the same volume : viz.

18. *Owaine Myles*, (fol. 90.) giving an account of the wonders of St. Patrick's Purgatory. This is a translation into verse of the story related in Mat. Paris's Hist. (sub Ann. 1153.)—It is in distichs beginning thus,

God þat ys so full of myght.

In the same Manuscript are one or two other narrative poems, which might be reckoned among the Romances, but being rather religious Legends, I shall barely mention them ; as, *Tundale*, f. 17. *Trentale Sci Gregorii*. f. 84. *Jerome*. f. 133. *Eustache*. f. 136.

19. *Octavian imperator*, an ancient Romance of Chivalry, is in the same vol. of the Cotton Library, f. 20. —Notwithstanding the name, this old poem has nothing in common with the history of the Roman Emperors. It is in a very peculiar kind of Stanza, whereof 1, 2, 3, & 5, rhyme together, as do the 4 and 6. It begins thus,

Ihesu þat was with spere ystonge.

In the public Library at Camb. (*b*) is a poem with the same title, that begins very differently

Lyttyll and mykyll, olde and yonge.

20. *Eglamour of Artas* (or *Artoys*) is preserved in the same Vol. with the foregoing both in the Cotton Library, and public Library at Camb. It is also in the

(*b*) No. 690. (30.) Vid. Oxon, Catalog. MSS. p. 394.

Editor's

Editor's folio MS. p. 295. where it is divided into 6 Parts.—A printed Copy is in the Bodleian Library, C. 39. Art. Seld. And among Mr. Garrick's old plays, K. vol. X. It is in distichs, and begins thus,

Ihesu Crist of heven kyng.

21. *Syr Triamore* (in stan. of 6. Lines) is preserved in MS. in the Editor's folio Volume, p. 210. and in the public Library at Camb. (690. § 29. Vid. Cat. MSS. p. 394.)—Two printed Copies are extant in the Bodleian Library, and among Mr. Garrick's plays in the same volumes with the last article. Both the Editor's MS. and the printed Copies begin

Nowe Jefu Chryfte our heven kynge.

The Cambridge Copy, thus,

Heven blys that all shall wyne.

22. *Sir Degree* (*Degare*, or *Degore*, which last seems the true title) in 5 Parts, in distichs, is preserved in the Editor's folio MS. p. 371. and in the public Library at Camb. (ubi supra.)—A printed Copy is in the Bod. Library, C. 39. Art. Seld. and among Mr. Garrick's plays K. vol. IX.—The Editor's MS. and the printed Copies begin

Lordinge, and you wyl holde you styl.

The Cambridge MS. has it

Lyftenyth, lordyngis, gente and fre.

23. *Ipomydon*, (or *Chylde Ipomydon*) is preserved among the Harl. MSS. 2252. (44.) It is in distichs and begins,

Mekely, lordyngis, gentylle and fre.

In

In the Library of Lincoln Cathedral. K k. 3. 10. is an old imperfect printed Copy, wanting the whole first sheet A.

24. *The Squyr of Lowe degre*, is one of those burlesqued by Chaucer in his R. of Thopas (a)—Mr. Garrick has a printed Copy of this, among his old plays, K. Vol. IX. It begins

It was a squyer of lowe degre,
That loved the kings daughter of Hungre.

24. *Hystorye of K. Richard Cure [Cœur] de Lyon*. [Impr. W. de Worde, 1528. 4to.] is preserved in the Bodleian Library, C. 39. Art. Selden. A fragment of it is also remaining in the Edinburgh MS. of old English Poems; Num. XXXVI. in 2 leaves. A large Extract from this Romance has been given already above, p. 15. Richard was the peculiar patron of Chivalry, and therefore was a favourite with the old Minstrels. See Warton's Observ. V. 1. p. 29. V. 2. p. 40.

26. The following I have not seen, but I believe they may all be referred to the Class of Romances.

The Knight of Courtesy and the Lady of Faguel (Bodl. Lib. C. 39. Art. Seld. a printed Copy.) This Mr. Warton thinks is the Story of Coucy's Heart, related in Fauchet, and in Howel's Letters. [V. 1. S. 6. L. 20. See Wart. Obs. V. 2. p. 40.] The Editor has seen a very beautiful old ballad on this subject in French.

27. The four following are all preserved in the MS. so often referred to in the public Library at Camb. (690. Appendix to Bp. More's MSS. in Cat. MSS. Tom. 2. p. 394.) viz. *The Erle of Tholouse*. (N^o 27.) beginning

Jesu Chryste in Trynyte.

28. *Ro-*

(a) See Mr. Warton's Observat. Vol. 1. p. 139. note.

28. *Roberd Kyng of Cyfyll* (or Sicily) shewing the fall of Pride. Of this there is also a Copy among the Harl. MSS. 1703. (3.) The Camb. MS. begins

Princis that be prowde in prefe.

29. *Le bone Florence of Rome*, beginning thus

As ferre as men ride or gone.

30. *Dioclesian the Emperour*, beginning,

Sum tyme ther was a noble man,

31. The two knightly brothers *Amy and Amelion* (among the Harl. MSS. 2386. § 42.) I suppose to be an old Romance of Chivalry; as also the fragment of the *Lady Belesant*, the Duke of Lombardy's fair daughter, mentioned in the same article. See the Catalog. Vol. 2.

32. In the Edinburgh MS. so often referred to (preserved in the Advocates Library, W 4. 1.) might probably be found some other articles to add to this list, as well as other copies of some of the pieces mentioned in it; for the whole Volume contains not fewer than xxxvii poems or romances, some of them very long. But as many of them have lost the beginnings, which have been cut out for the sake of the illuminations; and as I have not had an opportunity of examining the MS. myself, I shall be content to mention only the articles that follow †, viz.

An old Romance about *Rouland* (not I believe the famous Paladine, but a champion named *Rouland Louth*; quere) being in the Volume, Numb. xxvii. in 5 leaves, and wants the beginning.

† Some of these I give, though mutilated and divested of their titles, because they may enable a curious inquirer to complete or improve other copies.

33. Another

33. Another Romance, that seems to be a kind of continuation of this last, intituled, *Otuel a Knight*, (Numb. xxviii. in 11 leaves and a half.) The two first lines are,

Herkneth both zinge and old,
That willen heren of battailes bold.

34. *The King of Tars* (Numb. iv. in 5 leaves and a half) beginning thus,

Herkneth to me bothe eld and zing,
For Maries love that swete thing.

35. A Tale or Romance, (Numb. i. 2 leaves), that wants both beginning and end. The first lines now remaining are,

Th Erl him graunted his will y-wis. that the knicht him haden
y told.

The Baronnis that were of mikle pris. befor him thay weren
y-cald.

36. Another mutilated Tale or Romance (Numb. iiii. 4 leaves). The first lines at present are,

To Mr Steward wil y gon. and tellen him the sothe of the
Refeyved bestow sone anon. gif zou will serve and with hir be.

37. A mutilated Tale or Romance (Numb. xi. in 13 leaves). The two first lines that occur are,

That riche Douke his fest gan hold
With Erls and with Baronns bold.

I cannot conclude my account of this curious Manuscript, without acknowledging publicly, that I am indebted to the friendship of the Reverend Dr. BLAIR, the present ingenious Professor of Belles Lettres in the Univerfity of Edinburgh, for whatever I know of its contents, and for the important additions it has enabled me to make to the foregoing List.



E S S A Y

THE THIRD.

ON

THE ORIGIN

OF

The English Stage, &c.

A N
E S S A Y
O N
THE ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH STAGE,
AND
ON THE CONDUCT
O F
OUR FIRST DRAMATIC POETS.

IT is well known that dramatic poetry in this and most other nations of Europe owes its origin, or at least its revival, to those religious shows, which in the dark ages were usually exhibited on the more solemn festivals. At those times they were wont to represent in the churches the lives and miracles of the saints, or some of the more important stories of scripture. And as the most mysterious subjects were frequently chosen, such as the Incarnation, Passion, and Resurrection of Christ, &c. these exhibitions acquired the general name of MYSTERIES. At first they were probably a kind of dumb shews, intermingled, it may be, with a few short speeches; at length they grew into a regular series of connected dialogues, formally divided into acts and scenes. Specimens of these in their most improved

*** See on the Subject of this Essay, Bp. Warburton's *Shakespeare*, vol. 5. p. 338.—Preface to *Doddsley's Old Plays*.—*Riccoboni's account of the Theatre of Europe*.—*Hist. du Theatre de France*, par M. de Fontenelle, Oeuvres, 12mo. 1758. tom. 3me.—*Prologo a las Comedias de Cervantes*. Madrid, 1749. 4to.

proved state (being at best but poor artless compositions) may be seen among Doddsley's OLD PLAYS and in Osborne's HARLEYAN MISCEL. How they were exhibited in their most simple form, we may learn from an ancient novel (often quoted by our old dramatic poets (a)) intitled a merke Test of a man that was called Howleglas (b) &c. being a translation from the Dutch language, in which he is named *Ulenfpiegel*. Howleglas, whose waggish tricks are the subject of this book, after many adventures comes to live with a priest, who makes him his parish-clark. This priest is described as keeping a LEMAN or concubine, who had but one eye, to whom Howleglas owed a grudge for revealing his rogueries to his master. The story thus proceeds, " And than in the meane season, " while Howleglas was parysh clarke, at Easter they " should play the resurrection of our lorde: and for " because than the men wer not learned, nor could " not read, the priest toke his leman, and put her in " the grave for an Aungell: and this seing Howleglas, " toke to hym iij of the symplest persons that were in " the towne, that played the iij Maries; and the Person [i. e. Parson or Rector] played Christe, with a " baner in his hand. Than saide Howleglas to the " symple persons, Whan the Aungel asketh you, " whome you seke, you may saye, The parsons leman " with one iye. Than it fortuneth that the tyme was " come that they must playe, and the Aungel asked " them whom they sought, and than sayd they, as " Howleglas had shewed and lerned them afore, and " than answered they, We seke the priests leman with " one iye. And than the prieste might heare that he " was mocked. And whan the priestes leman herd

A 2

" that,

(a) See Ben Jonson's Poetaster, Act 3. sc. 4. and his Masque of the Fortunate Isles. Whalley's Edit. vol. 2. p. 49. vol. 6. p. 190.

(b) Howleglas is said in the Preface to have died in M. cccc. i. At the end of the book, in M. ccc. i.

" that, she arose out of the grave, and would have
 " smyten with her fist Howleglas upon the cheke, but
 " she missed him and smote one of the simple persons
 " that played one of the thre Maries; and he gave
 " her another; and than toke she him by the heare
 " [hair]; and that seing his wyfe, came running haf-
 " tely to smite the priestes leaman; and than the
 " priest seeing this, caste down hys baner and went to
 " helpe his woman, so that the one gave the other
 " sore strokes, and made great noyse in the churche.
 " And than Howleglas seyng them lyinge together by
 " the eares in the bodi of the churche, went his way
 " out of the village, and came no more there (c)."

As the old Mysteries frequently required the representation of some allegorical personage, such as Death, Sin, Charity, Faith, and the like, by degrees the rude poets of those unlettered ages began to form compleat dramatic pieces consisting intirely of such personifications. These they intitled MORAL PLAYS, or MORALITIES. The Mysteries were very inartificial, representing the scripture stories simply according to the letter. But the Moralities are not devoid of invention; they exhibit outlines of the dramatic art: they contain something of a fable or plot, and even attempt to delineate characters and manners. I have now before me two that were printed early in the reign of Henry VIII; in which I think one may plainly discover the seeds of Tragedy and Comedy; for which reason I shall give a short analysis of them both.

One of them is intitled *Every Man* (d). The subject of this piece is the summoning of man out of the world by death; and its moral, that nothing will then avail him but a well-spent life and the comforts of religion. This subject and moral are opened in a monologue

(c) *C. Imprinted . . . by Wyllyam Copland*: without date, in 4to. bl. let. among Mr. Garrick's Old Plays, K. vol. 10.

(d) See a farther account of this play in Vol. II. Book II. page 112.

nologue spoken by the MESSENGER (for that was the name generally given by our ancestors to the prologue on their rude stage :) then God (e) is represented ; who, after some general complaints on the degeneracy of mankind, calls for DETH, and orders him to bring before his tribunal EVERY-MAN, for so is called the personage who represents the human race. EVERY-MAN appears, and receives the summons with all the marks of confusion and terror. When death is withdrawn, Every-man applies for relief in this distress to FELLOWSHIP, KINDRED, GOODS, or Riches, but they successively renounce and forsake him. In this disconsolate state he betakes himself to GOOD-DEDES, who, after upbraiding him with his long neglect of her (f), introduces him to her sister KNOWLEDGE, and she leads him to the " holy man CONFESSION," who appoints him penance : this he inflicts upon himself on the stage, and then withdraws to receive the sacraments of the priest. On his return he begins to wax faint, and after STRENGTH, BEAUTY, DISCRETION, and FIVE WITS (g) have all taken their final leave of him, gradually expires on the stage ; Good-dedes still accompanying him to the last. Then an AUNGELL descends to sing his *requiem* : and the epilogue is spoken by a person, called DOCTOUR, who recapitulates the whole, and delivers the moral,

" ¶. This memoriall men may have in mynde,
 " Ye herers, take it of worth old and yonge,
 " And forsake pryde, for he disceyeth you in thende,
 " And remembre Beautè, Five Witts, Strength and
 " They all at last do Every-man forsake ; [Discrecion,
 " Save his Good Dedes there dothe he take :

A 3

" But

(e) The second person of the Trinity seems to be meant.

(f) Those above-mentioned are male characters.

(g) i. e. the Five Senses. These are frequently exhibited as five distinct personages upon the Spanish stage ; (see Riccoboni, p. 98.) but our moralist has represented them all by one character.

" But beware, for and they be small,
 " Before God he hath no helpe at all." &c.

From this short analysis it may be observed, that **Every Man** is a grave solemn piece, not without some rude attempts to excite terror and pity, and therefore may not improperly be referred to the class of tragedy. It is remarkable that in this old simple drama the fable is conducted upon the strictest model of the Greek tragedy. The action is simply one, the time of action is that of the performance, the scene is never changed, nor the stage ever empty. **EVERY-MAN**, the hero of the piece, after his first appearance never withdraws, except when he goes out to receive the sacraments, which could not well be exhibited in public; and during his absence **KNOWLEDGE** descants on the excellence and power of the priesthood, somewhat after the manner of the Greek chorus. And indeed, except in the circumstance of **Every-man's** expiring on the stage, the **Sampson Agonistes** of Milton is hardly formed on a severer plan.

The other play is intitled **Hick-Scorner (b)**, and bears no distant resemblance to comedy: its chief aim seems to be to exhibit characters and manners, its plot being much less regular than the foregoing. The prologue is spoken by **PITY** represented under the character of an aged pilgrim, he is joined by **CONTEMPLATION** and **PERSEVERANCE**, two holy men, who, after lamenting the degeneracy of the age, declare their resolution of stemming the torrent. **Pity** then is left upon the stage, and presently found by **FREWYLL**, representing a lewd debauchee, who, with his dissolute companion **IMAGINATION**, relate their manner of life, and not without humour describe the stews and other places of base resort. They are presently joined by

HICK-

(b) Empranted by me Wynkyn de Worde, no date; in 4to. bl. Let.

HICK-SCORNER, who is drawn as a libertine returned from travel, and agreeably to his name scoffs at religion. These three are described as extremely vicious, who glory in every act of wickedness: at length two of them quarrel, and PITY endeavours to part the fray; on this they fall upon him, put him in the stocks, and there leave him. Pity then descants in a kind of lyric measure on the profligacy of the age, and in this situation is found by Perseverance and Contemplacion, who set him at liberty, and advise him to go in search of the delinquents. As soon as he is gone, Frewill appears again; and, after relating in a very comic manner some of his rogueries and escapes from justice, is rebuked by the two holy men, who, after a long altercation, at length convert him and his libertine companion Imaginacion from their vicious course of life: and then the play ends with a few verses from Perseverance by way of epilogue. This and every Morality I have seen conclude with a solemn prayer. They are all of them in rhyme; in a kind of loose stanza, intermixed with distichs.

It would be needless to point out the absurdities in the plan and conduct of the foregoing play: they are evidently great. It is sufficient to observe, that, bating the moral and religious reflection of PITY, &c. the piece is of a comic cast, and contains a humorous display of some of the vices of the age. Indeed the author has generally been so little attentive to the allegory, that we need only substitute other names to his personages, and we have real characters and living manners.

We see then that the writers of these Moralities were upon the very threshold of real Tragedy and Comedy; and therefore we are not to wonder that Tragedies and Comedies in form soon after took place, especially as the revival of learning about this time brought them acquainted with the Roman and Grecian models.

II. At what period of time the Mysteries and Moralities had their rise, it is difficult to discover. Holy plays representing the miracles and sufferings of the saints appear to have been no novelty in the reign of Henry II. and a lighter sort of interludes were not then unknown (i). In Chaucer's Time "Plays of Miracles" in lent were the common resort of idle gossips (k). Towards the latter end of Henry the VIIth's reign Moralities were so common, that John Rastel, brother-in-law to Sir Thomas More, conceived a design of making them the vehicle of science and natural philosophy. With this view he published 'A new interlude and a mery of the nature of the iiiii elements, declarynge many proper points of philosophy naturall, and of dyvers straunge landys, (l) &c. It is observable that the poet speaks of the discovery of America as then recent ;

— " Within this xx yere
 " Westwarde be founde new landes
 " That we never harde tell of before this," &c.

The West Indies were discovered by Columbus in 1492, which fixes the writing of this play to about 1510. The play of ~~Rich. Scornet~~ was probably somewhat

(i) See Fitz-stephens's description of London, preserved by Stow, *Londonia pro spectaculis theatralibus, pro ludis scenicis, ludos habet sanctiores, representationes miraculorum, &c.* He is thought to have written in the R. of Hen. II. and to have died in that of Rich. I. It is true at the end of his book we find mentioned *Henricum regem tertium*; but as it comes in between the names of the Empress Maud and Thomas Becket, it is probably a mistake of some transcriber for *Henricum regem ij.* as it might be written in MS. From a passage in his Chap. *De Religione*, it should seem that the body of St. Thomas Becket was just then a new acquisition to the church of Canterbury.

(k) See Prologue to Wife of Bath's Tale, v. 338. Urry's edit.

(l) Mr. Garrick has an imperfect copy, (Old Plays, i. vol. 3.) The *Dramatis Personæ* are, "A. The Messengere [or Prologue] Nature
 " naturate. Humanytè. Studyous Desire. Sensuall Appetyte. The
 " Taverner. Experyence. Ygnoraunce. (Also yf ye lyst ye may
 " brynge

what more ancient, as he still more imperfectly alludes to the American discoveries, under the name of " the Newe founde Ilonde," sign. A. vij.

It appears from the play of *The Four Elements*, that Interludes were then very common: The profession of *PLAYER* was no less common; for in an old satire intitled *Cock Hoistles Bote* (*m*) the author enumerates all the most common trades or callings, as " Carpenters, Coopers, Joyners, &c. and among others, *PLAYERS*, tho' it must be acknowledged he has placed them in no very reputable company.

" *PLAYERS*, purse-cutters, money-batterers,

" *Golde-washers*, *tomblers*, *jogelers*,

" *Pardoners*, &c."

Sign. B. vj.

It is observable that in the old Moralities of *Hick Scorner*, *Every-man*, &c. there is no kind of stage direction for the exits and entrances of the personages, no division of acts and scenes. But in the moral interlude of *Lusty Juventus* (*n*), written under Edw. VI. the exits and entrances begin to be noted in the margin (*o*): at length in Q. Elizabeth's reign Moralities appeared

" brynge in a dysgyfyngc.)" Afterwards follows a table of the matters handled in the interlude. Among which are " *C. Of certeyn conclusions prouvyng the yerthe must nedes be rounde, and that it hengyth in the myddes of the fyrmament, and that yt is in circumference above xxi M. myle.*" — " *C. Of certeyne points of cosmographie—and of dyvers straunge regyons,—and of the new founde landys and the maner of the people.*" This part is extremely curious, as it shows what notions were entertained of the new American discoveries by our own countrymen.

(*m*) Pr. at the Sun in Fleet-str. by W. de Worde, no date. bl. l. 4to.

(*n*) Described in vol. 2. p. 112. The *Dramatis Personæ* of this piece are, " *C. Messenger. Lusty Juventus. Good Counsaill. Knowledge. Sathan the devyll. Hypocrisie. Fellowship. Abominable-lying [an Harlot.] God's-merciful-promises.*"

(*o*) I have also discovered some few *Exeats* and *Intrats* in the very old Interlude of the *Four Elements*.

appeared formally divided into acts and scenes, with a regular prologue, &c. One of these is reprinted by Dodsley.

In the time of Hen. VIII. one or two dramatic pieces had been published under the classical names of Comedy and Tragedy (*p*), but they appear not to have been intended for popular use: it was not till the religious ferments had subsided that the public had leisure to attend to dramatic poetry. In the reign of Eliz. Tragedies and Comedies began to appear in form, and could the poets have persevered, the first models were good. *Corboduc*, a regular tragedy, was acted in 1561 (*q*); and Gascoigne, in 1566, exhibited *Acasta*, a translation from Euripides, as also *The Supposes*, a regular comedy, from Ariosto: near thirty years before any of Shakespeare's were printed.

The people however still retained a relish for their old Mysteries and Moralities (*r*), and the popular dramatic poets seem to have made them their models. The graver sort of Moralities appear to have given birth to our modern TRAGEDY; as our COMEDY evidently took its rise from the lighter interludes of that kind. And as most of these pieces contain an absurd mixture of religion and buffoonery, an eminent critic (*s*) has well deduced from thence the origin of our unnatural

(*p*) Bp. Bale had applied the name of Tragedy to his *Mystery of Gods Promises*, in 1538. In 1540 John Palsgrave, B. D. had republished a Latin comedy, called *Acclastus*, with an English version. Holingshed tells us, (vol. 3. p. 850.) that so early as 1520, the king had "a goodlie comedie of Plautus plaied" before him at Greenwich; but this was in Latin, as Mr. FARMER informs us in his late curious "Essay on the Learning of Shakespeare." 8vo. p. 31.

(*q*) See Ames, p. 316.—This play appears to have been first printed under the name of *Corboduc*; then under that of *Perray and Porrey*, in 1569; and again, under *Corboduc*, 1590.—Ames calls the first edit. Quarto; Langbaine, Octavo; and Tanner, 12mo.

(*r*) The general reception the old Moralities had upon the stage, will account for the fondness of all our first poets for allegory. Subjects of this kind were familiar to every body.

(*s*) Bp. Warburt. Shakesp. vol. 5.

natural TRAGI-COMEDIES. Even after the people had been accustomed to Tragedies and Comedies, Moralities still kept their ground: one of them intitled *The New Custom* (*t*) was printed so late as 1573: at length they assumed the name of MASQUES (*u*), and with some classical improvements, became in the two following reigns the favourite entertainments of the court.

As for the old Mysteries, which ceased to be acted after the Reformation, they seem to have given rise to a third species of stage exhibition, which, though now confounded with Tragedy or Comedy, were by our first dramatic writers considered as quite distinct from them both: these were Historical Plays, or HISTORIES, a species of dramatic writing, which resembled the old Mysteries in representing a series of historical events simply in the order of time in which they happened, without any regard to the three great unities. These pieces seem to differ from Tragedy, just as much as Historical poems do from Epic: as the *Pharsalia* does from the *Æneid*. What might contribute to make dramatic poetry take this turn was this; soon after the Mysteries ceased to be exhibited, there was published a large collection of poetical narratives, called *The Mirror for Magistrates* (*w*), wherein a great number of the most eminent characters in English history are drawn relating their own misfortunes. This book was popular and of a dramatic cast, and therefore, as an elegant writer (*x*) has well observed, might have its influence in producing Historic Plays. These narratives probably furnished the subjects, and the ancient Mysteries suggested the plan.

That

(*t*) Reprinted among Doddsley's Old Plays, vol. 1.

(*u*) In some of these appeared characters full as extraordinary as in any of the old Moralities. In Ben Jonson's Masque of *Christmas* 1616, one of the personages is MINCED PYE.

(*w*) The first part of which was printed in 1559.

(*x*) Catal. of Royal and Noble authors, vol. 1. p. 166, 7.

That our old writers considered Historical Plays as somewhat distinct from Tragedy and Comedy, appears from numberless passages of their works. "Of late days, says Stow, instead of those stage-playes (y) have been used Comedies, Tragedies, Enterludes, and HISTORIES both true and fained." Survey of London (z).—Beaumont and Fletcher, in the prologue to *The Captain*, say,

"This is nor Comedy, nor Tragedy,

"Nor HISTORY."—

Polonius in *Hamlet* commends the actors, as the best in the world "either for Tragedie, Comedie, HISTORIE, Pastorall," &c. And Shakespeare's friends, Heminge and Condell, in the first folio edit. of his plays, in 1623, have not only intitled their book "Mr. William Shakespeare's Comedies, HISTORIES, and Tragedies:" but in their Table of Contents have arranged them under those three several heads: placing in the class of HISTORIES, "K. John, Richard II. Henry IV. 2 pts. Henry V. Henry VI. 3 pts. Richard III. and Henry VIII."

This distinction deserves the attention of the critics: for if it be the first canon of sound criticism to examine any work by those rules the author prescribed for his observance, then we ought not to try Shakespeare's HISTORIES by the general laws of Tragedy or Comedy. Whether the rule itself be vicious or not, is another inquiry: but certainly we ought to examine a work only by those principles according to which it was composed. This would save a deal of impertinent criticism.

III. We have now brought the inquiry as low as was intended, but cannot quit it, without entering into a short

(y) The Creation of the World, acted at Skinners-well, in 1409.

(z) See Mr. Warton's Observations, vol. 2. p. 109.

short description of what one may call the oeconomy of the ancient English stage.

Such was the fondness of our forefathers for dramatic entertainments, that not fewer than NINETEEN Playhouses had been opened before the year 1633, when Prynne published his *Histriomastix* (a). From this writer it should seem that "tobacco, wine, and "beer (b)" were in those days the usual accommodations in the theatre as now at Sadlers Wells.

With regard to the players themselves, the several companies were retainers, or menial servants to particular noblemen (c), who protected them in the exercise of

(a) He speaks in p. 492. of the play-houses in Bishopsgate-street, and on Ludgate-hill, which are not among the SEVENTEEN enumerated in the Preface to Doddsley's *Old Plays*.

(b) So, I think, we may infer from the following passage, viz. "How many are there, who according to their several qualities, "spend 2 d. 3 d. 4 d. 6 d. 12 d. 18 d. 2 s. and sometimes 4 s. or 5 s. "at a play-house, day by day, if coach-hire, boat-hire, tobacco, "wine, beere, and such like vaine expences, which playes doe usually occasion, be cast into the reckoning?" Prynne's *Histriom.* p. 322.

But that Tobacco was smoked in the play-houses, appears from Taylor the Water-poet, in his Proclamation for Tobacco's Propagation. "Let PLAY-HOUSES, drinking-schools, taverns, &c. be continually haunted with the contaminous vapours of it; nay (if it "be possible) bring it into the CHURCHES, and there choak up "their preachers." (Works, p. 253.) And this was really the case at Cambridge: James I. sent a letter in 1607, against "taking Tobacco" in St. Mary's. So I learn from my friend Mr. FARMER.

A gent. has informed me, that once going into a church in Holland, he saw the male part of the audience sitting with their hats on, smoking tobacco, while the preacher was holding forth in his Morning-gown.

(c) See the Pref. to Doddsley's *Old Plays*.—The author of an old Invektive against the Stage, called *A third Blast of Retrait from Plaies, &c.* 1580. 12mo. says, "Alas! that private affection should "so raigne in the nobilitie, that to pleasure their servants, and to "upholde them in their vanitie, they should restraine the magistrates "from executing their office! . . . They [the nobility] are thought to "be covetous by permitting their servants . . . to live at the devotion
" or

of their profession: and many of them were occasionally strollers, that travelled from one gentleman's house to another. Yet so much were they encouraged, that, notwithstanding their multitude, some of them acquired large fortunes. Edward Allen, master of the play-house called the Globe, who founded Dulwich college, is a known instance. And an old writer speaks of the very inferior actors, whom he calls the Hirelings, as living in a degree of splendor, which was thought enormous in that frugal age (*d*).

At the same time the ancient prices of admission were often very low. Some houses had penny-benches. (*e*) The "two-penny gallery" is mentioned in the prologue to Beaumont and Fletcher's *Woman-Hater*.
And

"or almes of other men, passing from countrie to countrie, from one gentleman's house to another, offering their service, which is a kind of beggerie. Who indeede, to speake more trulie, are become beggers for their servants. For comonlie the good-will men beare to their Lordes makes them draw the stringes of their purses to extend their liberalitie." Vid. pag. 75, 76, &c.

(*d*) Stephen Gosson in his *Schoole of Abuse*, 1579. 12mo. fo. 23. says thus of what he terms in his margin *PLAYERS-MEN*: "Over lashing in apparel is so common a fault, that the very hyerlings of some of our Players, which stand at revirion of vi. s. by the week, jet under gentlemens noses in futs of silke, exercising themselves to prating on the stage, and common scoffing when they come abroad, where they look askance over the shoulder at every man, of whom the *SUNDAY* before they begged an almes. I speake not this, as though everye one that professeth the qualitie so abused himselfe, for it is well knowen, that some of them are sober, discrete, properly learned, honest householders and citizens, well thought on among their neighbours at home," [he seems to mean *EDW. ALLEN* abovementioned] "though the pryde of their shadoves (I meane those hangbyes, whom they succour with stipend) cause them to be somewhat ill-talked of abroad."

(*e*) So a MS. of Oldys, from Tom Nash, an old pamphlet-writer. And this is confirmed by Taylor the Water-poet, in his *Praise of Beggerie*. (p. 99.)

"Yet have I seen a begger with his many, [sc. vermin]
"Come at a Play-house, all in for one penny."

And seats of three-pence and a groat seem to be intended in the passage of Prynne above referred to. Yet different houses varied in their prices: That play-house called the *HORR* had five several priced seats from six-pence to half-a-crown (*f*). But the general price of what is now called the *PIT*, seems to have been a shilling (*g*).

The day originally set apart for theatrical exhibition appears to have been Sunday; probably because the first dramatic pieces were of a religious cast. During a great part of Queen Elizabeth's reign the play-houses were only licensed to be opened on that day (*b*): But before the end of her reign, or soon after, this abuse was probably removed.

The

(*f*) Induct. to Ben. Jonson's Bartholomew-fair.

(*g*) Shakesp. Prol. to Hen. viij.—Beaum. and Fletch. Prol. to the Captain, and to the Mad-lover. The *PIT* probably had its name from one of the Play-houses having been a Cock-pit.

(*b*) So Ste. Gosson, in his Schoole of Abuse, 1579, 12mo. speaking of the Players, says, "These, because they are allowed to play every Sunday, make iiii. or v. Sundayes at least every week." fol. 24.—So the author of A Second and Third Blast of Retrait from Plaies, p. 1580. 12mo. "Let the magistrate but repel them from the libertie of plaieng on the Sabboth-daie. . . . To plaie on the Sabboth is but a priuiledge of sufferance, and might with ease be repelled, were it thoroughly followed." pag. 61, 62. So again, "Is not the Sabboth of al other daies the most abused? . . . Wherefore abuse not so the Sabboth-daie, my brethren; leave not the temple of the Lord." . . . "Those unfaverie morsels of unseemlie sentences passing out of the mouth of a ruffenlie plaier, doth more content the hungrie humors of the rude multitude, and carrieth better rellish in their mouthes, than the bread of the worde, &c." Vid. pag. 63. 65. 69. &c. I do not recollect that exclamations of this kind occur in Prynne, whence I conclude that this enormity no longer subsisted in his time.

It should also seem, from the author of the Third Blast above-quoted, that the Churches still continued to be used occasionally for theatres. Thus in p. 77. he says, that the Players, (who, as has been observed, were servants of the nobility) "under the title of their maisters, or as retainers, are priuiledged to roave abroad, and permitted to publish their mametree in everie temple of God, and that throughout England, unto the horrible contempt of praier,"

The usual time of acting was early in the afternoon (i), plays being generally performed by day-light (k). All female parts were performed by men, no English actresses being ever seen on the public stage (l) before the civil wars. And as for the playhouse furniture and ornaments, tho' some houses were probably more decorated than others, yet in general "they had no other " scenes nor decorations of the stage, but only old " tapestry, and the stage strewed with rushes, with " habits accordingly (m):" as we are assured in a short discourse on the English stage, subjoined to Flecknoe's LOVE'S KINGDOM, 1674. 12mo.

(i) "He entertaines us (says Overbury in his character of an Actor) "in the best leasure of our life, that is, between meales; "the most unfit time either for study, or bodily exercise."—Even so late as in the reign of Cha. II. Plays generally began at 3 in the afternoon. (k) See Biogr. Brit. I. 117. n. D.

(l) I say "no ENGLISH Actress—on the PUBLIC Stage," because Prynne speaks of it as an unusual enormity, that "they had "French-women actors in a play not long since personated in Black-friars Playhouse." This was in 1629. vid. p. 215. And tho' female parts were performed by men or boys on the public stage, yet in Masques at Court, the Queen and her ladies made no scruple to perform the principal parts, especially in the reigns of Jam. I. and Cha. I.

Sir William Davenant, after the restoration, introduced women, scenery, and higher prices. See Cibber's Apology for his own Life.

(m) It appears from an Epigram of Taylor the Water-poet, that one of the principal theatres in his time, viz. The Globe on the Bankside, Southwark, (which Ben Jonson calls the Glory of the Bank, and Fort of the whole Parish), had been covered with thatch till it was burnt down in 1613.—(See Taylor's Sculler. Epig. 22. p. 31. Jonson's Execration on Vulcan.)

Puttenham tells us they used Vizards in his time, "partly to "supply the want of players, when there were more parts than there "were persons, or that it was not thought meet to trouble . . . "princes chambers with too many folkes." [Art of Eng. Poef. 1539. p. 26.] From the last clause, it should seem that they were chiefly used in the MASQUES at Court.



A D D I T I O N S

T O

THE ESSAY ON THE ORIGIN OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.

IT is not easy to ascertain the time when Plays of Miracles began in England, but they appear to have been exhibited here very soon after the conquest. Mat. Paris tells us, that Geoffery afterwards Abbot of St. Albans, a Norman, who had been sent for over by Abbot Richard to take upon him the direction of the school of that monastery, coming too late, went to Dunstable, and taught in the abby there; where he caused to be acted (probably by his scholars) a MIRACLE-PLAY OF ST. CATHARINE, composed by himself*. This was long before the year 1119, and probably within the 11th century. The above play of ST. CATHARINE was, for aught that appears, the first spectacle of this sort that was exhibited in these kingdoms: And an eminent French Writer thinks it was even the first attempt towards the revival of Dramatic Entertainments in all Europe; being long before the Representations of MYSTERIES in France; which did not begin till 1398 †.

Again, the learned and ingenious historian of the council of Constance † ascribes to the English the introduction of Plays into Germany. He tells us that the Emperor having been absent from the council for some time, was at his return received with great rejoicings,

A

and

* *Apud Dunestapliam quendam ludum de sancta Katerina (quem MIRACULA vulgariter appellamus) fecit. Ad quæ decoranda, petiit a sacrista sancti Albani, ut sibi Capæ Chorales accommodarentur et obtinuit. Et fuit ludus ille de sancta Katerina.* Vitæ Abbat. ad fin. Hist. Mat. Paris. fol. 1639. p. 56.—We see here that Plays of Miracles were become common enough in the time of Mat. Paris, who flourished about 1240. But that indeed appears from the more early account of FITZ-STEPHENS: where an ingenious friend thinks that the *Henricum Tertium* of that writer, is most probably Henry the second's son, who was crowned during the life of his father, in 1170, and is generally distinguished as *Rex juvenis*, *Rex filius*, and sometimes they were jointly named *Reges Angliæ*.

† Vid. Abregé Chron. de l'Hist. de Fr. par M. HENAUT. a l'an. 1179.

† M. L'ENFANT. vid. Hist. du Conc. de Constance. vol. 2. p. 449.

and that the English fathers in particular did upon that occasion, cause a sacred comedy to be acted before him on Sunday 31. Jan. 1417; the subjects of which were: THE NATIVITY OF OUR SAVIOUR; THE ARRIVAL OF THE EASTERN MAGI; and THE MASSACRE BY HEROD. Thence it appears, says this writer, that the Germans are obliged to the English for the invention of this sort of spectacles, unknown to them before that period.

But the fondness of our ancestors for this species of dramatic exhibition and some other curious particulars relating to the early history of the English stage, will appear from a large MS. containing the ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF HENRY PERCY 5th Earl of Northumberland†, Anno Dom. 1512. In the following extracts from this book it will be seen that the exhibiting of the old mysteries or scripture plays entered into the stated regulations of domestic œconomy in the houses of our ancient nobility, and that it was as much the business of the Chaplain in those days to compose Plays for the family, as it is now for him to make Sermons.

I shall give the extracts in the same order in which they occur in different parts of the book. viz.

“ ITEM to be payd for Rewards of Players for
 “ Playes playd in Christynmas by stranegers in my
 “ house after xx. * d, every Play by estimation: sum
 “ xxxiiij. s. iiij. d. †.

„ My Lordes Chapleyns in householde vj. viz: the
 “ Almonar, and if he be a MAKER OF INTERLUDYS,
 “ than he to have a servaunt to the intent for writ-
 “ tyng

† This MS. belongs to the present ILLUSTRIOUS DESCENDANTS of that Nobleman, who have with their usual condescension been prevailed on to have a small number of copies printed from this very curious and invaluable MS. which shows beyond any other monument of antiquity now extant the almost royal state and splendor of our ancient Barons, the number of their attendants, the regulations of their household, and the whole plan of their domestic œconomy.

* This was not so small a sum then as it may now appear; for in another part of this MS. the price ordered to be given for a fat ox is but 1½s. 4d. and for a lean one 8s.

† At this rate the number of Plays acted must have been twenty.

" tynge of the parts : and ells to have none. The

" Maister of grammer, &c.

" ITEM, my lorde usith and accustomith to gyf yerely

" when his lordship is at home to every Erles

" PLAYERS that comes to his lordship betwixt

" cristynmas and candilmas if he be his speciall

" lorde and frende and kinsman — xx s.

" ITEM, my lorde usith and accustomyth to gyf yerly

" when his lordship is at home to every Lordis

" PLAYERS, that comyth to his lordship betwixt cris-

" tynmas and candilmas, — x. s.

" ITEM, My lorde useth and accustomyth to gyfe yerely

" if is lordship kepe a chapell and be at home, them

" of his lordships chapell, if they doo play the

" Play of the NATIVITE uppon cristynmas day in

" the mornyng in my lords chapell before his lord-

" ship — xx. s.

" ITEM, to them of his lordships chappell and

" other his lordships servaunts that doith play the

" Play before his lordship uppon SHROF-TUESDAY at

" night yerely in reward — x s.

" ITEM, to them that playth the Play of RE-

" SURRECTION upon estur day in the mornyng in

" my lordis ' chapell ' befor his lordship—xx. s.

" ITEM, My lorde useth and accustomyth yerly to gif

" hym which is ordeyned to be the MAISTER OF THE

" REVELLS yerly in my lordis hous in cristinmas for

" the overseynge and orderinge of his lordships

" Playes, Interludes and Drefinge that is plaid befor

" his lordship in his hous in the xij dayes of Cristin-

" mas and they to have a rewarde for that caus yer-

" ly—xx. s.

" ITEM. My lorde useth and accustomyth to gyf every

" of the Four Persons that his lordship admyted as

" his PLAYERS to come to his lordship yerly at Cry-

" stynmas and at all other such tymes as his lordship

" shall comande them for playing of Playes and In-

" terludes befor his lordship in his lordships hous for

" every of their fees for an hole yere "

I shall

I shall conclude this subject with several little miscellaneous remarks, which I shall throw together in the form of a NOTE*.

* THERE is reason to think that about the time of the Reformation, great numbers of PLAYS were printed, though so few of that age are now to be found; for part of Queen Elizabeth's INJUNCTIONS in 1559 are particularly directed to the suppressing of "Many Pamphlets, PLAYES, and Ballads: that no manner of Person shall enterprize to print any such, &c. but under certain restrictions." Vid. sect. 5.

With regard to the Play-house PRICES, an ancient satirical piece called the "Blacke-Booke. Lond. 1604." 4to. talks of "the Six-PENNY roomes in play-houses:" and leaves a legacy to one whom he calls "Arch-tobacco-taker of England, in ordinaries, upon STAGES both common and private."—And in the "Belmans Night-walks by DECKER, 1616." 4to. I find this, — "Pay thy TWO-PFNCE to a Player, in this gallery thou mayst sit by a harlot." Yet small as these PRICES may now be thought, the Profession of an Actor appears to have been rather lucrative; this might be inferred from the passage quoted in the Essay, (Not. d.) to which may be added the following extract from "GREENE'S Groatsworth of wit, 1625." 4to. (See Roberto's Tale, Sign. D. 3. b.) "WHAT is your profession?" — "Truly, Sir, . . . I am a PLAYER." "A Player? . . . I took you rather for a Gentleman of great living; for if by outward Habit men should be censured, I tell you, you would be taken for a substantial man." "So I am where I dwell. . . . What though the world once went hard with me, when I was fayne to carry my playing-fardle a foot backe: *Tempora mutantur* . . . for my very share in playing apparrell will not be sold for TWO HUNDRED pounds, &c."

Lastly, with regard to the Decorations of the Stage, mean as they then were, Coryate thought them splendid compared to what he saw abroad: Speaking of the Theatre for Comedies at Venice, he says, "The house is very beggarly and base in comparison of our stately PLAY-HOUSES in England: neyther can their actors compare with ours for apparrell, shewes, and musicke. Here I observed certaine things that I never saw before: For I saw WOMEN ACT, a thing that I never saw before, though I have heard that it hath been sometimes used in London; and they performed it with as good a grace, action, gesture, and whatsoever convenient for a Player, as ever I saw any masculine Actor." Coryate's Crudities, 4to. 1611, p. 247.

It ought however to be observed, that amid such a multitude of PLAY-HOUSES as subsisted in the Metropolis before the Civil Wars, there must have been a great difference between their several Accommodations, Ornaments, and Prices; and that some would be much more shewy than others, though probably all were much inferior in splendor to what the two Theatres were after the Restoration.



ESSAY

THE FOURTH.

ON THE METRE IN THE

VISIONS

OF

PIERCE PLOWMAN,

1350.

THE FIRST

OF THE

Y A Z 2 3

THE FOURTH

OF THE

Y A Z 2 3

THE FIFTH

OF THE

Y A Z 2 3

THE SIXTH

OF THE

Y A Z 2 3

ON THE METRE OF

PIERCE PLOWMAN'S Visions.

WE learn from Wormius (*a*), that the ancient Islandic poets used a great variety of measures: he mentions 136 different kinds, without including RHYME, or a correspondence of final syllables: yet this was occasionally used, as appears from the Ode of Egil, which Wormius hath inserted in his book.

He hath analysed the structure of one of these kinds of verse, the harmony of which neither depended on the quantity of the syllables, like that of the ancient Greeks and Romans; nor on the rhymes at the end, as in modern poetry; but consisted altogether in alliteration, or a certain artful repetition of the sounds in the middle of the verses. This was adjusted according to certain rules of their prosody, one of which was, that every distich should contain at least three words beginning with the same letter or sound. Two of these correspondent sounds might be placed either in the first or second line of the distich, and one in the other: but all three were not regularly to be crowded into one line. This will be best understood by the following examples (*b*).

“ Meire og Minne
Mogu heimdaller.”

“ Gab Ginunga
Enn Gras huerge.”

There were many other little niceties observed by the Islandic poets, who as they retained their original language and peculiarities longer than the other nations of

A 2

Gothic

(*a*) *Literatura Runica*. Hafniæ 1636. 4to.—1651. fol. The ISLANDIC language is of the same origin as our ANGLO-SAXON, being both dialects of the ancient GOTHIC or TEUTONIC. Vid. Hickesii Præfat. in *Grammat. Anglo-Saxon. & Moess-Goth.* 4to. 1689.

(*b*) Vid. Hickes *Antiq. Literatur. Septentrional.* Tom. I. p. 217.

Gothic race, had time to cultivate their native poetry more, and to carry it to a higher pitch of refinement, than any of the rest.

Their brethren the Anglo-saxon poets occasionally used the same kind of alliteration, and it is common to meet in their writings with similar examples of the foregoing rules. Take an instance or two in modern characters : (c)

" *Skeop tha and Skyrede*
Skyppend ure."

" *Ham and Heahfæt*
Heofena rikes."

I know not however that there is any where extant an entire Saxon poem all in this measure. But distichs of this sort perpetually occur in all their poems of any length.

Now, if we examine the versification of *PIERCE PLOW-MAN'S VISIONS*, we shall find it constructed exactly by these rules ; and therefore each line, as printed, is in reality a distich of two verses, and will, I believe, be found distinguished as such, by some mark or other in all the ancient MSS. viz.

" In a Somer Season, | when 'hot (d) was the Sunne,

" I Schope me into Shroubs, | as I a Skepe were ;

" In Habite as an Harmet | unHoly of werkes,

" Went Wyde in thys world | Wonders to heare, &c.

So that the author of this poem will not be found to have invented any new mode of versification, as some have supposed, but only to have retained that of the old Saxon and Gothic poets ; which was probably never wholly laid aside, but occasionally used at different intervals ;
tho'

(c) Ibid.

(d) So I would read with Mr. Warton, rather than either 'soft,' as in MS. or 'set,' as in PCC.

tho' the ravages of time will not suffer us now to produce a regular series of poems entirely written in it.

There are some readers, whom it may gratify to mention, that these *VISIONS OF PIERCE* [i. e. Peter] the *PLOWMAN*, are attributed to Robert Langland, a secular priest, born at Mortimer's Cleobury in Shropshire, and fellow of Oriel college in Oxford, who flourished in the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II. and published his poem a few years after 1350. It consists of xx *PASSUS* or Breaks (*e*), exhibiting a series of visions, which he pretends happened to him on Malvern hills in Worcestershire. The author excels in strong allegoric painting, and has with great humour spirit and fancy, censured most of the vices incident to the several professions of life; but he particularly inveighs against the corruptions of the clergy, and the absurdities of superstition. Of this work I have now before me four different editions in black letter quarto. Three of them are printed in 1550 by *Roberte Crowley* dwelling in *Clye rentes* in *Wolburne*. It is remarkable that two of these are mentioned in the title-page as both of the second impression, tho' they contain evident variations in every page (*f*). The other is said to be newlye imprynted after the authors owne copy by *Owen Rogers*, Feb. 21. 1561.

As Langland was not the first, so neither was he the last that used this alliterative species of versification. To Rogers's edition of the *Visions* is subjoined a poem,

A 3

which

(*e*) The poem properly contains xxi parts: the word *PASSUS*, adopted by the author, seems only to denote the break or division between two parts, tho' by the ignorance of the printer applied to the parts themselves. See vol. 3. preface to ballad III. where *Passus* seems to signify *Pause*.

(*f*) That which seems the first of the two, is thus distinguished in the title-page, *nowe the seconde tyme imprynted by Roberte Crowley*; the other thus, *nowe the seconde time imprynted by Roberte Crowley*. In the former the folios are thus erroneously numbered 39. 39. 41. 63. 43. 42. 45. &c. The booksellers of those days were not ostentatious of multiplying editions.

which was probably writ in imitation of them, intitled
PIERCE THE PLOUGHMAN'S CREDE. It begins thus,

" Cros, and Curteis Christ, this beginning spede
 " For the Faders Frendshipe, that Fourmed heaven,
 " And through the Special Spirit, that Sprong of hem tweyne,
 " And al in one godhed endles dwelleth."

The author feigns himself ignorant of his Creed, to be instructed in which he applies to the four religious orders, viz. the gray friers of St. Francis, the black friers of St. Dominic, the Carmelites or white friers, and the Augustines. This affords him occasion to describe in very lively colours the sloth, ignorance, and immorality of those reverend drones. At length he meets with Pierce a poor Ploughman, who resolves his doubts, and instructs him in the principles of true religion. The author was evidently a follower of Wiccliff, whom he mentions (with honour) as no longer living (*g*). Now that reformer died in 1384. How long after his death this poem was written, does not appear.

In the Cotton library is a volume of ancient English poems (*b*), two of which are written in this alliterative metre, and have the division of the lines into distichs distinctly marked by a point, as is usual in old poetical MSS. That which stands first of the two (tho' perhaps the latest written) is intitled **THE SEGE OF IERLAM**, [i. e. Jerusalem], being an old fabulous legend composed by some monk, and stuffed with marvellous figments concerning the destruction of the holy city and temple. It begins thus,

" In Tyberius Tyme . the Trewe emperour
 " Syr Sesar hymself, beSted in Rome

" Whyll

(*g*) Signature. Cii.

(*b*) Caligula A. 19. foli 109. 123.

" Whyll Pylat was Provoſte . under that Prynce ryche

" And Jewes Juſtice alſo . of Judeas londe

" Herode under empere . as Herytage wolde

" Kyng, &c.

The other is intituled CHEVELERE ASSIGNE [or De Cigne], that is " The Knight of the Swan," being an ancient Romance, beginning thus,

" All-Weldynge God . Whence it is his Wylle

" Wele he Wereth his Werke . With his owene bonde

" For ofte Harmes were Hente . that Helpe were myſte

" Nere the Hyznes of Hym . that lengeth in Hevene

" For this, &c.

Among Mr. Garrick's collection of old plays (i) is a proſe narrative of the adventures of this ſame Knight of the Swan, " newly tranſlated out of Frenſhe into Englyſhe " at thinſtigacion of the puyſſaunt and illuſtryous " prynce, lorde Edward duke of Buckyngname." This lord it ſeems had a peculiar intereſt in the book, for in the preface the tranſlator tells us, that this " highe " dygne and illuſtryous prynce my lorde Edward by " the grace of god Duke of Buckyngnam, erle of He- " reforde, Stafforde, and Northampton, deſyrynge coty- " dyally to encrease and augment the name and fame " of ſuch as were relucant in vertuous feates and tri- " umphaunt actes of chyvalry, and to encourage and " ſtyre every luſty and gentell herte by the exem- " plicacyon of the ſame, havynge a goodli booke of the " highe and miraculous hystori of a famous and puyſ- " ſaunt kynge, named Oryant, ſometime reynynge in " the parties of beyonde the ſea, havynge to his wiſe " a noble lady; of whome ſhe conceived fixe ſonnes " and a daughter, and chylded of them at one only

A 4

" time;

" time; " at whose byrthe echone of them had a
 " chayne of sylver at their neckes, the whiche were
 " all tourned by the provydence of god into whyte
 " swannes (save one) of the whiche this present hystory
 " is compyled, named Helyas, the knight of the
 " swanne, OF WHOME LINIALLY IS DYSCENDED MY
 " SAYDE LORDE. The whiche ententifly to have the
 " sayde hystory more amply and unyversally knownen
 " in thys hys natif countrie, as it is in other, hath of
 " hys hie bountie by some of his faithful and trusti
 " servauntes cohorted mi mayster Wynkin de Worde
 " (k) to put the said vertuous hystori in prynte at
 " whose instigacion and stiring I (Roberte Copland)
 " have me applied, moiening the helpe of god, to re-
 " duce and translate it into our maternal and vulgare
 " english tonge after the capacite and rudenesse of
 " my weke entendement." — A curious picture of
 the times! While in Italy literature and the fine arts
 were ready to burst forth with classical splendor under
 Leo X. the first peer of this realm was proud to de-
 rive his pedigree from a fabulous KNIGHT OF THE
 SWAN. (1).

To return to the Metre of Pierce Plowman: In the
 folio MS. so often quoted in these volumes, are two
 poems written in that species of versification. One
 of these is an ancient allegorical poem, intituled DEATH
 AND LIFFE, (in 2 fitts or parts, containing 458 distichs)
 which, for ought that appears, may have been written
 as early, if not before, the time of Langland. The
 first forty lines are broke as they should be into distichs,
 a dis-

(k) W. de Worde's edit. is in 1512. See Ames. p. 92. Mr. G's
 copy is "¶ Imprinted at London by me Wylliam Copland.

(1) He is said in the story-book to be the grandfather of God-
 frey of Boulogne, thro' whom I suppose the duke made out his
 relation to him. This duke was beheaded, May 17. 1521. 13 Hen.
 VIII.

a distinction that is neglected in the remaining part of the poem, in order I suppose to save room. It begins,

" *Christ Christen king,*

that on the Crosse tholed;

" *Hadd Paines and Passyons*

to defend our soules;

" *Give us Grace on the Ground*

the Greatlye to serve,

" *For that Royall Red blood*

that Rann from thy side."

The subject of this piece is a vision, wherein the poet sees a contest for superiority between "our lady Dame *"LIFE,"* and the "ugly fiend Dame *DEATH;*" who with their several attributes and concomitants are personified in a fine vein of allegoric painting. Part of the description of Dame *LIFE* is,

" *Shee was Brighter of her Blee,*

then was the Bright sonn:

" *Her Rudd Redder then the Rose,*

that on the Rife hangeth:

" *Meekely smiling with her Mouth,*

And Merry in her lookes;

" *Ever Laughing for Love,*

as shee Like would.

" *And as shee came by the Bankes,*

the Boughes eche one

" *They Lowted to that Ladye,*

and Layd forth their branches;

" *Blossomes, and Burgens*

Breathed full sweete;

" *Flowers*

" Flowers Flourished in the Frith,
 where shee Forth stepped;
 " And the Grasse, that was Gray,
 Greened belive."

DEATH is afterwards sketched out with a no less bold and original pencil.

The other poem is that, which is quoted in the 27th page of this volume, and which was probably the last that was ever written in this kind of metre in its original simplicity unaccompanied with rhyme. It should have been observed above in pag. 27. that in this poem the lines are throughout divided into distichs, thus:

Grant Gracious God,
 Grant me this time, &c.

It is intituled SCOTTISH FEILDE (in 2 FITTS, 420 distichs,) containing a very circumstantial narrative of the battle of Flodden, fought Sept. 9. 1513: at which the author seems to have been present from his speaking in the first person plural,

" Then we Tild downe our Tents,
 that To'd were a thousand."

In the conclusion of the poem he gives this account of himself,

" He was a Gentleman by Jesu,
 that this Gest made:
 " Which Say but as he Sayd (m)
 for Sooth and noe other.

(m) Probably corrupted for — 'Says but as he Saw.'

" At

" At Bagily that Bearne
 his Biding place had;
 " And his ancestors of old time
 have yearded (*n*) their longe,
 " Before William Conquerour
 this Cuntry did inhabitt.
 " Jesus Bring 'them (*o*)' to Blisse,
 that Brought us forth of BALE,
 " That hath Harkened me Heare
 or Heard my TALE."

The village of Bagily or Baguleigh is in Cheshire, of which county the author appears to have been, from other passages in the body of the poem, particularly from the pains he takes to wipe off a stain from the Cheshire-men, who it seems ran away in that battle, and from his encomiums on the Stanleys earls of Derby, who usually headed that county. He laments the death of James Stanley bishop of Ely, as what had recently happened when this poem was written: which serves to ascertain its date, for that prelate died March 22. 1514-5.

Thus have we traced the Alliterative Measure so low as the sixteenth century. It is remarkable that all such poets as used this kind of metre, retained along with it many peculiar Saxon idioms, particularly such as were appropriated to poetry: this deserves the attention of those, who were desirous to recover the laws of the ancient Saxon Poesy, usually given up as in-

(*n*) Yearded, i. e. *buried, earthed, earded*. It is common to pronounce "Earth," in some parts of England "Yearth," particularly in the North.—Pitscottie speaking of James III. slain at Bannockbourn, says, "Nae man wot whar they YEARDED him."

(*o*) 'us.' MS.

inexplicable: I am of opinion that they will find what they seek in the Metre of Pierce Plowman (*p*).

About the beginning of the sixteenth century this kind of versification began to change its form: the author of SCOTTISH FIELD, we see, concludes his poem with a Couplet of Rhymes: this was an innovation, that did but prepare the way for the general admission of that more modish ornament; till at length the old uncouth verse of the ancient writers would no longer go down without it. Yet when Rhyme began to be superadded, all the niceties of Alliteration were at first retained along with it; and the song of LITTLE JOHN NOBODY exhibits this union very clearly.* By degrees the correspondence of final sounds engrossing the whole attention of the poet and fully satisfying the reader, the internal embellishment of Alliteration was no longer studied, and thus was this kind of metre at length swallowed up and lost in our common Burlesque Alexandrine, or Anapestic verse (*q*),

row

(*p*) And in that of Robert of Gloucester. See the next note.

(*q*) Consisting of four Anapests (o o -) in which the Accent rests upon every third syllable. This kind of Verse, which I also call the Burlesque Alexandrine (to distinguish it from the other Alexandrines of 11 and 14 syllables, the parents of our lyric measure: see examples, p. 138. &c.) was early applied by Robert of Gloucester to serious subjects. That writer's metre, like this of Langland's, is formed on the Saxon models, (each verse of his containing a Saxon distich) only instead of the internal Alliterations adopted by Langland, he rather chose final Rhymes, as the French poets have done since. Take a specimen.

“ The Saxons tho in ther power, tho thii were so rive,

“ Seve kingdoms made in Engelande, and suthen but vive:

“ The king of Northomberlond, and of Eastangle also,

“ Of Kent, and of Westsex, and of the March, therto.”

Robert of Gloucester wrote in the western dialect, and his language differs exceedingly from that of other contemporary Writers,
who

13

now never used but in ballads and pieces of light humour, as in the following Song of CONSCIENCE, and in that well-known doggrel,

“ A cobbler there was, and he lived in a stall.”

But although this kind of measure hath with us been thus degraded, it still retains among the French its ancient dignity : their grand Heroic Verse of twelve syllables (*r*) is the same genuine offspring of the old alliterative metre of the ancient Gothic and Francic poets, stripped like our Anapestic of its alliteration, and ornamented with rhyme : But with this difference, that whereas this kind of verse hath been applied by us only to light and trivial subjects, to which by its quick and lively measure it seemed best adapted, our Poets have let it remain in a more lax unconfined state,
as

who resided in the metropolis or in the midland counties. Had the Heptarchy continued, our English language would probably have been as much distinguished for its different dialects as the Greek; or at least as that of the several independent states of Italy.

(*r*) Or of thirteen syllables, in what they call a feminine verse. It is remarkable that the French alone have retained this old Gothic metre for their serious poems; while the English, Spaniards, &c. have adopted the Italic verse of ten syllables : altho' the Spaniards, as well as we, anciently used a short lined metre. I believe the success with which Petrarch, and perhaps one or two others, first used the heroic verse of ten syllables in Italian Poesy, recommended it to the Spanish writers; as it also did to our Chaucer, who first attempted it in English; and to his successors Lord Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt, &c.; who afterwards improved it and brought it to perfection. To Lord Surrey we also owe the first introduction of Blank Verse in his Versions of the *Æneid*.

(*s*) Thus our poets use this verse indifferently with 12, 11, and even 10 syllables. For though regularly it consists of 4 Anapests (*o o -*) or twelve syllables, yet they frequently retrench a syllable from the first or third Anapest; and sometimes from both : as in these instances from *Prior*, and the following Song of CONSCIENCE.

Whō hās ēēr bēēn āt Pārīs, mūst nēeds knōw thē Grēve,

Thē fātāl rētrēāt ōf th' ūnfōrt'nāte brāve.

I flēpt tō hīm strīght, ānd dīd hīm rēquīre.

as a greater degree of severity and strictness would have been inconsistent with the light and airy subjects to which they have applied it. On the other hand, the French having retained this Verse as the vehicle of their Epic and Tragic flights, in order to give it a stateliness and dignity were obliged to confine it to more exact laws of Scansion; they have therefore limited it to the number of twelve Syllables; and by making the Cæsura or Pause, as full and distinct as possible; and by other severe restrictions have given it all the solemnity of which it was capable. The harmony of both however depends so much on the same flow of cadence and disposal of the pause, that they appear plainly to be of the same original; and every French heroic verse evidently consists of the ancient Distich of their Francic ancestors: which, by the way, will account to us why this verse of the French so naturally resolves itself into two complete hemistichs. And indeed by making the cæsura or pause always to rest on the last syllable of a word, and by making a kind of pause in the sense, the French poets do in effect reduce their hemistichs to two distinct and independent verses: and some of their old poets have gone so far as to make the two hemistichs rhyme to each other (t).

After all, the old alliterative and anapestic metre of the English poets being chiefly used in a barbarous age, and in a rude unpolished language, abounds with verses defective in length, proportion, and harmony; and therefore cannot enter into a comparison with the correct versification of the best modern French writers; but making allowances for these defects, that sort of metre runs with a cadence so exactly resembling the French heroic Alexandrine, that I believe no peculiarities of their versification can be produced, which cannot

(t) See Instances in *L'Hist. de la Poësie Francoise*, par MASSIEU, &c. In the same book are also specimens of alliterative French Verses.

cannot be exactly matched in the alliterative metre. I shall give by way of example a few lines from the modern French poets confronted with parallels from the ancient poem of LIFE AND DEATH: in these I shall denote the Cæsura or Pause by a perpendicular line, and the Cadence by the marks of the Latin quantity.

L' succès fut toujours | *un enfant de l' audace ;*
 All shall drye with the dints | that I deal with my hands.
L' bœmmē prūd'nt voit trēp | *l' illūsiōn lē sūit,*
 Yōndēr dāmsēl is death | that drēsēth hēr tō smīte.
L' intrépīdē voit mīeux | *et lē fāntōmē fūt*.*
 Whēn shē dōlēfūllī sāw | hōw shē dāng dōwne hīr fōlke.
Même aux yeux de l' injūste | *un injūste est bōrrīblē†.*
 Thēn shē cāst ūp ā cēye | tō thē hīgh kīng of hēavēn.
Dū mēnsēngē toujours | *lē vrāi dēmēurē māitrē,*
 Thōu shālt bītērlyē byē | or ēlse thē bōokē fāilēth
Pour pāritre bōnnēte bōmme | *en un mōt, il fāut l' ētrē‡.*
 Thūs I fāred thrōughē ā frīthe | whēre thē flōwērs wēre mānyē.

To conclude ; the metre of Pierce Plowman's Visions has no kind of relation with what is commonly called Blank Verse; yet has it a sort of harmony of its own, proceeding not so much from its alliteration, as from the artful disposal of its cadence, and the contrivance of its pause. So that when the ear is a little accustomed to it, it is by no means unpleasing; but claims all the merit of the French heroic numbers, only far less polished; being sweetened, instead of their final rhymes, with the internal recurrence of similar sounds.

* Catalina. A. 3. † Boileau Sat. ‡ Boil. Sat. 11.



and the Council of the House of Commons
shall have power to make such regulations
as they may think fit for the better
conduct of the business of the House
and for the more efficient discharge
of its duties.

And the Council of the House of Commons
shall have power to make such regulations
as they may think fit for the better
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